

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



November 2013

Vol. 118, No. 11

₹ 10.00

THE ROAD TO WISDOM

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON

Love and Virtue

GENERALLY speaking, human religion begins with fear. 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'. But later comes the higher idea. 'Perfect love casteth out fear.' Traces of fear will remain with us until we get knowledge, know what God is. Christ, being man, had to see impurity and denounced it; but God, infinitely higher, does not see iniquity and cannot be angry. Denunciation is never the highest. David's hands were smeared with blood; he could not build the temple. (Bible, Samuel, Chap. XVII—end.)

The more we grow in love and virtue and holiness, the more we see love and virtue and holiness outside. All condemnation of others really condemns ourselves. Adjust the microcosm (which is in your power to do) and the macrocosm will adjust itself for you. It is like the hydrostatic paradox, one drop of water can balance the universe. We cannot see outside what we are not inside. The universe is to us what the huge engine is to the miniature engine; and indication of any error in the tiny engine leads us to imagine trouble in the huge one.

Every step that has been really gained in the world has been gained by love; criticising can never do any good, it has been tried for thousand of years. Condemnation accomplishes nothing.



A real Vedantist must sympathise with all. Monism, or absolute oneness is the very soul of Vedanta. Dualists naturally tend to become intolerant, to think theirs as the only way. ...

The meat-eating animal, like the lion, gives one blow and subsides, but the patient bullock goes on all day, eating and sleeping as it walks. The 'live Yankee' cannot compete with the rice-eating Chinese coolie. While military power dominates, meat-eating still prevail; but with the advance of science, fighting will grow less, and then the vegetarians will come in.

From *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 7.27–9.

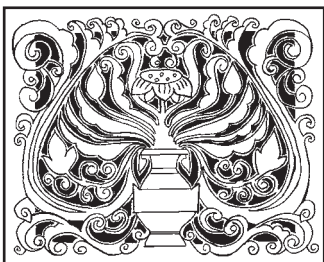


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Amrita Kalasha

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This is the Hindi version of the English Film 'Vivekananda by Vivekananda' which was released in January 2012 and the same was well received by devotees, admirers of Swamiji, and general public. Tamil version of the Film was also released last month under the title *Vivekanandarai Patri Vivekanandar*. The DVD (PAL) is available for sale on Chennai Math's online Store at the link:

<http://www.chennaiamath.org/istore/product/swami-vivekananda-ki-atmakatha-hindi-movie-dvd/>.

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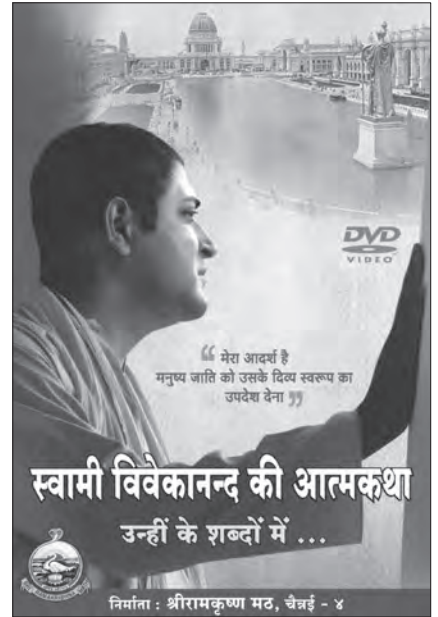
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Concept, Script, Screenplay and Direction: Karthik Saragur.

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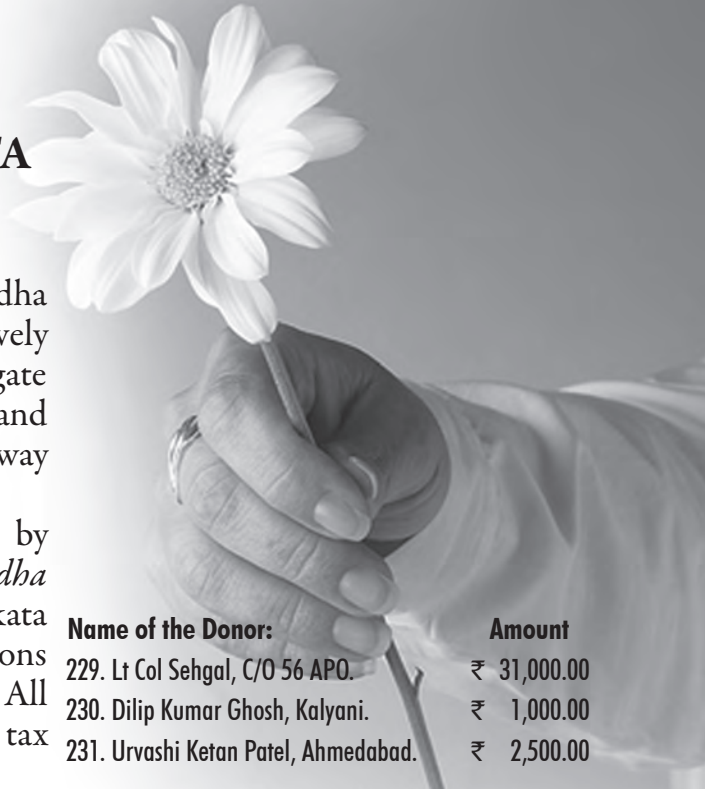
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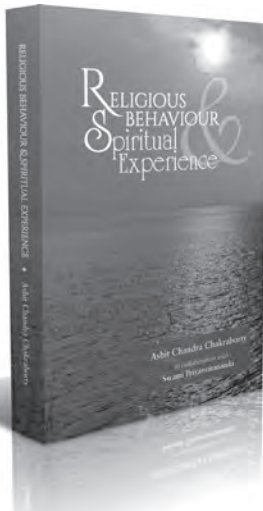
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November 2013

Vol. 118, No. 11

स्वभावमेके कवयो वदन्ति कालं तथान्ये परिमुह्यमानाः ।

देवस्यैष महिमा तु लोके येनेदं भ्राम्यते ब्रह्मचक्रम् ॥

Some sages speak of 'inherent nature' (as the cause); similarly, others under delusion say that it is 'time'. This glory in the world belongs surely to the effulgent One, because of whom this wheel of Brahman revolves.

(Shvetashvatara Upanishad, 6.1)

यः सर्वज्ञः सर्वविद्यस्यैष महिमा भुवि ।

दिव्ये ब्रह्मपुरे ह्येष व्योम्यात्मा प्रतिष्ठितः ॥

मनोमयः प्राणशरीरनेता प्रतिष्ठितोऽन्ने हृदयं सन्निधाय ।

तद्विज्ञानेन परिपश्यन्ति धीरा आनन्दरूपममृतं यद्विभाति ॥

He who knows all and understands all, and to whom belongs all the glory in the world—that Atman is placed in the space in the effulgent abode of Brahman. He assumes the forms of the mind and leads the body and the senses. He dwells in the body, inside the heart. By the knowledge of That which shines as the blissful and immortal Atman, the wise behold him in all beings.

(Mundaka Upanishad, 2.2.7)

यो वा एतामेवं वेदापहत्य पाप्मानमनन्ते स्वर्गे लाके ज्येये प्रतितिष्ठति प्रतितिष्ठति ।

Anyone who knows this (Brahman) thus, he, having dispelled sin, remains firmly seated in the boundless, blissful, and highest Brahman. He remains firmly seated (there).

(Kena Upanishad, 4.9)

THIS MONTH

Becoming Free from Burdens of all kinds is what people desperately want. These burdens, created and carried by the ego, can only be discarded when we approach the Divine Mother.

Rapid social changes are breaking down old ideas regarding the roles of both women and men. **Essence of Womanhood in India** looks at some of these recent developments. Swami Sandarshananda is a monk at the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur.



In the 2013 'Tribute to Swami Vivekananda' held at Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of North Texas, Dallas, Bob Stewart spoke on **Compassion in the Diamond Sutra and the 'Sermon on the Mount'**, showing the emphasis Buddhism and Christianity have given to compassion.

Is God Unfair? is a question that haunts active minds everywhere. Rajshree and Raghunath Deshmukh try to answer this by explaining the dynamics of the law of karma. The authors live and work in San Diego, California.

There is a growing interest in the religion and philosophy of Buddhism. Dr Amartya Kumar Bhattacharya, from the Department of Applied Mechanics, Bengal Engineering and Science University, explains the salient features of **Mahayana and Zen Buddhism**.



Hinduism has many streams of thought contained within it. Subhasis Chattopadhyay, Assistant Professor of English, Ramananda College, Bishnupur, briefly presents **Modern Hinduism: Some Reflections**.



Vedanta always has an ally in science, which brushes aside superstitions. Harish Damodaran, a research scholar at Mahatma Gandhi

University, Kottayam, writes about the **Advaitic Interpretation of the Atom's Emptiness**.

In the final part of **Sri Chaitanya in the Sheath of Sri Nityananda**, Swami Devarajananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Sarisha, presents some of the higher similarities between the characters, life events, and teachings of Sri Chaitanya and Sri Ramakrishna.



In the fourteenth part of **Eternal Words**, Swami Adbhutananda cautions against the dangers of lust and greed. The swami's words are translated from *Sat Katha*, published by Udbodhan Office, Kolkata.

The seventeenth instalment of **Svarajya Siddhi: Attaining Self-dominion** by the eighteenth century Gangadharendra Saraswati, fifteenth pontiff of Kanchi Kamakoti Pitham, Kanchipuram, reviews some objections against Nyaya philosophy's concept of Ishvara.

Becoming Free from Burdens

AN ANCIENT GREEK MYTH speaks of Atlas, a Titan, who was punished by Zeus to hold aloft the celestial sphere so that it would not mix with the terrestrial sphere. Atlas, considered mighty down the ages because of this task, was however bound to this burden for all time. Except for those with a *bodhi-chitta*, awakened mind, we are like modern Atlanteans: we carry the whole world around with us, not on our shoulders but on our egos. Besides, we do not want to mix our ego with other egos. We all know about the various stages of physical growth, but little of how the ego evolves. It is known that as the mind and the ego develop, so does their burden, and it can be said that the ego is a burden. Most of the time we carry other peoples' burdens as well. There are many times in our lives when we would like to throw away all our heavy burdens, but we choose to carry this punishment around because we are too attached, weak, and ignorant to throw it away.

The ego is a conscious thinking, feeling, and willing subject that gives us an identity and personality. This sense of self is important in helping us be individuals with a sense of personal dignity, importance, and esteem. It carves a niche for itself in our world full of egos and propels us to work and progress in the direction we are fitted to do according to our karma. Social living entails numerous duties and responsibilities. This shared sense of burden is good and necessary for the ego to develop responsibly and is part of the growing up process. It holds the ego in check by putting many necessary restraints on its otherwise

unrestrained workings. This is the process of civilization. When flocks of birds or schools of fish move, there is no leader dictating each swerve and move; each individual follows its neighbours and harmoniously responds to them. These small movements are transmitted all over the flock or school, becoming a huge movement. Likewise, the ego is part of the whole social intelligence continuum, and its minute actions contribute to the activity of the entire spectrum of society. If everybody acted on their own whims and fancies, there would not be any society.

The ignorant ego is obsessed with the exercise of power, especially in the domination of others, and becomes a megalomaniac. The world has seen powerful megalomaniacs bringing untold misery, destruction, and death in the world to satisfy their egos. The ego is like a hungry demon who can never be satisfied but wants more and more. The ego of ordinary people chafes under innumerable restraints and burns within and so burns others.


The ego, which tries to forcibly draw everything to itself, is countered by an equally strong force that draws the ego out of itself. These two forces called *pravritti*, circling inwards, and *nivritti*, circling forwards, act not just on egos but on the whole of creation—from the atom to the biggest galaxy. One force gives rise to forms, the other force breaks things down; one is positive and the other negative. Forms break to be remade into other forms, and thus the whole universe of change is ruled by these forces. The ego, constantly experiencing these tidal forces

of change, is pulled between selfishness and unselfishness, right and wrong, and so on. Being subject to these forces, the ego cannot survive alone: it needs others. This need for others results in clashes between egos. Despite all this chaos of constraints, clashes, and forces acting on the egos, there has been a gradual human progress. It seems there is some higher power, apart from the social intelligence continuum, that directs everything in an orderly manner.

Not only do we carry this burden of life, the ego, but we also have alter egos. Another burden that is totally opposite to what was discussed above is self-imposed: the ego, on which we carry our personalities, character, identity, culture, religion, profession, skills, and talents, is also weighed down by additional tiers consisting of family, community, nationality, race, and so on. The exaggerated sense of ego thinks of itself as the centre, on which the whole world depends. This ego is then apparently the strongest thing in the world to carry such a burden. This ego, like that of Atlas, is also bound to its burden, but ridiculously thinks itself free. It wrongly thinks that it is the best among the family, community, nationality, race, and so on—it thinks that the other egos forming part of the tiers are worthless. But of course this is the bad nature of the ego. It forgets that most of this inflated self-importance is imaginary—this imaginary karma is what binds one to the world.

Karma gives one the method to come out of the imaginary world of the ego. It is the law of freedom. When we work in the real world, we are shown our proper place in it by the hammering we receive from others. We then become humble. The science of doing this is rightly called karma yoga, which calls for a lot of spiritual strength. To avoid this struggle many people go in for the other yogas—bhakti, jnana, and raja—but in an entirely wrong way. Bhakti becomes

love for oneself, not for God or other jivas; jnana becomes a method to feel that the ego is real and the rest of the world is unreal; and through raja people sit brooding on their own ego and sam-skaras, making them stronger, instead of focusing on the object of meditation! It should have been the other way round. However, karma yoga is prescribed as the starting point because through its performance the mind becomes pure, *chitta-shuddhi*. Thus the inflated ego has to be attenuated through a slow process of karma yoga. This slow process can be quickened by adding compassion to all of our deeds, words, and thoughts. Sri Sarada Devi the Holy Mother says: ‘Can you call him a man who is devoid of compassion? He is a veritable beast.’

Speaking of the Holy Mother, Sri Ramakrishna says: ‘She (Mother) is Sarada, Saraswati; she has come to impart knowledge.’ ‘She has descended by covering up her beauty this time.’ The Holy Mother sometimes unselfconsciously revealed her true nature as well: ‘People say, I am Kali.’ The Divine Mother alone has the sole task of creating and sustaining the world with all its multifarious beings. Sri Ramakrishna teaches: ‘After the creation the Primal Power dwells in the universe itself. She brings forth this phenomenal world and then pervades it.’ It is the Divine Mother who is the container of the universe and what is contained in it. And she is the real doer, who works and carries this burden effortlessly, for it is her divine mother nature to do so. The individual ego has foolishly appropriated the role of considering itself as a doer. We do not realize that individual egos are nothing but reflections of her Self. She is the essence of the ego and of everything in the world. As the ego’s perception is righted, it sees that the way out is by realizing that it is the Divine Mother who actually bears all the burdens of this world, because she loves to do so. 

Essence of Womanhood in India

Swami Sandarshanananda

THE RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES women enjoyed in ancient India were almost equal to that of men. The accounts, available in the earliest texts, show that women were not subject to awkward restrictions and that they were relatively free. Women, for instance, rose to become seers and intuited many Vedic mantras. This attainment fetched some of them the venerable appellations of *rishika*, female rishi, and *brahmavadinis*, female expounders of the knowledge of Brahman.

Rishikas were the products of the *gurukula*, studying at the guru's house, system of education, to which both girls and boys had access. Girls too pursued their studies and received training to attain the highest goal of life. The choice of being a householder or taking up a life of renunciation was open to men as well as women. A wife was *saha-dharmini*, co-religionist, who would follow, with her husband, the stages of grihastha, householder; vanaprastha, dwelling in the forest; and sannyasa. The performance of certain religious rites was deemed invalid if the wife was absent. That women had an equal voice in contentious religious matters is evident from the public debates and discussions in which they participated along with men. Marriages were secure, sacred, and monogamous, except in some select cases like that of certain rulers.

The Middle Ages

Even before the Middle Ages in India there was a gradual shift from many of these noble ideals. Swami Vivekananda says: 'In ancient India the centres of national life were always the

intellectual and spiritual and not [the] political.'¹ With the rise of the kshatriya power these centres gradually became focal points of political power. Power tussles between kings and the intermittent but devastating invasions from outside changed the very structure of society. The imposition of new regulations altered the old sociocultural milieu, isolating women from intellectual and social life.

As avenues for the general education of women were closed, their activities shrank to doing household chores and being taught at home by male members of the family. Men slowly gained the upper hand with the sole right to decide everything. Women were also excluded from the right to have property, compelling them to become entirely dependent on men. Especially in North India, societies required women of the higher classes to wear the purdah, which contributed to their isolation. There were of course cases where, due to enlightened family members, women asserted themselves. K M Panikkar says:

In the field of administration Indian women produced some notable figures during this period. There was Rudramba, the Kakateya queen of whom Marco Polo speaks; Rezia Begum (13th century) of whom it was said that her one weakness was that she was a woman; Chandbibí, who appeared on the ramparts of the fort of Ahmadnagar dressed in male attire and put heart in the defenders of that town against the prowess of Akbar himself; Tarabai, the Maharatta heroine who was the life and soul of Maharatta resistance during the last determined onslaught of Aurangzeb; Mangammal, whose benign rule is still a green memory in

the South, and Ahalyabai Holkar, to whose administrative genius Sir John Malcolm has paid a magnificent tribute. These are but a few outstanding names among the great women that India can boast of during this period.²

As mentioned earlier, the Middle Ages in India was a mass of political confusion due to wars and other destabilizing forces. As a result, appropriate reforms to move towards an egalitarian society did not occur, and women, children, and the needy lost even the little of their remaining rights and privileges. This medieval mindset continued for centuries beyond the Middle Ages, creating a myopic vision whenever the question of emancipating women gained priority.

The Modern Period

The trend of depriving women of their legitimate claims was prevalent not only in India but all over the world. Gradually, ideas about the role of women began to change and 'at the 1980 World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women in Copenhagen, member states and participants saw women as agents of change at the national and international levels, and in political, social and economic areas. Women were also seen as key in building more just, rational societies and in the struggle for fundamental national rights and self-determination of peoples against wars of aggression.'³ A programme of action was adopted to address situations that involved:

Lack of sufficient involvement of men in improving women's role in society; insufficient political will; lack of recognition for the value of women's contribution to society; lack of attention to the particular needs of women in planning; a shortage of women in decision-making positions; insufficient services to support the role of women in national life, such as co-operatives, day-care centres and credit facilities; overall lack of necessary financial

resources; and, lack of awareness among women about the opportunities available to them.⁴

Even with male chauvinism persisting by and large, women are slowly coming out of the shadows of male domination. For example, in many places of India one happily sees that the panchayat system has become the most successful democratic institution for women. There are about thirty-seven per cent of women elected in the panchayats, out of which the majority belongs to scheduled castes and tribes, and below-poverty-line families.⁵ This is of course exceptional, considering the widespread poverty and illiteracy among Indian rural women.

The surge of political awareness among women at the panchayat level, in spite of a lack of formal education, is usually attributed to newly approved government legislation of fifty per cent reservation for women, up from the previous thirty-three per cent. But very few take note that men do not want to lose the upper hand in public life, thereby stunting the progress of women from backward sections to rise beyond the panchayat level. Thus the political participation of women, who are the agents of change, is being slowed down by the malady of the medieval male mindset. Under these circumstances, until men change their selfish attitudes, real regeneration of a vast majority of working women in India will remain a far cry.

Indian democracy is rendered vibrant because women, showing a better sense of responsibility, exercise their franchise. In this regard, India sets an example and draws admiration from the rest of the world. Thanks to the Indian administration that has made such a difficult thing happen by organizing peaceful polls and creating awareness regarding empowerment among women. But it is unfortunate that women are still being deprived of due representation at higher democratic forums. Unless men become

conscience-smitten, the fate of less fortunate Indian women may not change much, in spite of the present embellished economic and educational conditions of the nation.

Sixty-six years after the Indian Independence public offices everywhere are comparatively occupied by a good number of women. Some nations, where women were not expected to work in public offices till a few years ago, are seeing capable working women ignoring many socio-religious injunctions against them. This type of economic liberation has evoked a change in the lifestyle of women and families. Women are now also assertive, confident, and able to make a big contribution to every social field. Their involvement, by themselves or by the government, is pushing back social barriers based on gender. The notion that giving liberty to women would make them go astray and bring disrepute has been proved wrong. Most women, given the heavy responsibility of working in today's world, are also looking after their homes. Slowly men are also now pitching in to help at home by doing what was previously thought of as typical women's duties.

But the crucial question is: how many women of this type are from the lowest rungs of society, who constitute a vast majority? The answer is obvious: only a few rural women have opportunities as compared to their urban sisters. The poor have to be given educational and economic opportunities; only such women will empower themselves and make changes in the existing rigid rural mindset. Not that they are less hard-working or intelligent, but they need empowerment and opportunities.

Though the government of India understands the situation and is making efforts to raise the conditions of society by improving women's situation, one wonders whether the legislation reaches down to really help. Legislation does

help, but only as a support for women who want to themselves improve. There are daily examples of rural women exhibiting outstanding strength and resilience. It is known that women are the props of social life in rural India. Liberate women and rural society becomes dynamic. Surrounded by men, they also know how to become enterprising. It is encouraging to see that some village women have proved their worth in public life as well.

Sri Sarada Devi's Serene Dynamism

The role of womanhood in lifting India is necessary and inevitable. A woman has an inborn aptitude for raising children, taking care of the elders, feeding the household, and doing hundreds of other things. She is the protector and transmitter of culture. Nature has crafted women with more inner strength, along with a sense of responsibility. This has given them restraint and resilience. Nature has also given them the capacity to absorb shocks better and function in a subtle fashion to prevent or withstand pain. If enough opportunities are given to *all*, not only to a few, women to unfold their qualities in all affairs, the world will become a better, safer, and happier place to live.

Sri Sarada Devi, born more than a hundred and fifty years ago, revealed many of the sterling women's qualities to the highest degree, despite countless difficult situations. She encountered many social barriers and eventually became iconic, and all this due to her palpable spirituality. Holy Mother was born in a poor rural household and grew up without formal education. Notwithstanding such limitations, she suffered no sense of diffidence and instead emerged as a conscientious leader of both men and women. She was perpetually blissful, forward-looking, and full of innovative ideas. Her confined living, first at her village at Jayrambati and then in the



'Sarada Devi', by Jane Adams

Nahabat at Dakshineswar, could not stand in the way of her intrinsic growth. In fact, she showed a great sense of equanimity and rare wisdom that filled people with awe. The Holy Mother could silently assert herself whenever she thought it necessary, without hurting the sentiments of others in the least.

Most of all, she kept herself hidden from the public, yet remained constantly dear to all and sundry. This happened because a serene dynamism was her forte. Her innate motherhood made her incessantly pray for the good of those in distress. Her leadership, which was also the outcome of her motherhood, was unselfconscious

and impeccable. It was a splendid blending of common sense, originality, profundity, simplicity, propriety, wisdom, sweetness, love, and command. It comfortably integrated class, caste, community, and colour into a harmonious whole. Placed at the helm of the movement started by Swami Vivekananda, run by learned monks and lay devotees, the Holy Mother provided a firm ground for its future multiplication into many branches extending far and wide. Every judgement she made and every action she undertook for the sake of the Order's smooth running is a legacy of the discreet demeanour that deserves to be emulated. An overflowing spirituality, from the inmost depths of her feminine being, flooded saints and sinners alike in order to establish a new order of humanity, at the centre of which she would stay as 'the Mother of all'.

The Ideal for Women

The Holy Mother once said: 'The Master regarded all creatures as manifestations of the Divine Mother. He left me behind to manifest the motherhood of God.'⁶ Truly, 'the Mother's life of motherliness and spiritual ministration may be considered from one view as only emanations from the basic fact of her divinity.'⁷ Swami Shivananda said: 'Holy Mother assumed a human body to awaken womanhood of the entire world. Don't you see, since her advent, what an amazing awakening has set in among the women of the world? They are now resolved to build up their lives gracefully and advance in all directions. A very surprising renaissance is swaying women in


the fields of spirituality, politics, science, literature, etc. And more will come.’⁸

The disciples of Sri Ramakrishna understood that a marvellous mother-power was manifest in the Holy Mother. Sri Ramakrishna was the first to discover that she was the repository of a bottomless power. He once warned Hriday, his nephew, to stop being rude to the Holy Mother: ‘If the one that is in her raises its hood even Brahma, Vishnu, or Maheshwara cannot save you.’⁹ Sri Ramakrishna harnessed and channelled that power for the cultivation of the essential human value—divinity—from the loss of which the world is suffering badly. The fact that she could assist and carry forwards his mission to a logical end was absolutely clear to Sri Ramakrishna. Hence he supported her endeavours without any reservations.

The way Sri Sarada Devi exhibited her superb abilities was an eye-opener to Swamiji. He said: ‘Our Mother is a vast reservoir of spiritual energy, though outwardly calm like the deep ocean. Her advent marks the beginning of a new era in the history of India. The ideals lived and taught by her would not only spiritualize the efforts for the emancipation of women in India but also influence and penetrate into the minds and hearts of women all the [*sic*] world over.’¹⁰ This has now become practically true. The Holy Mother is being universally considered by many women, from diverse backgrounds and cultures, as their guide and pathfinder. Taking her as their ideal, innumerable women’s organizations are coming up in order to implement her teachings. A monastic Order bearing her name and run exclusively by women, has been devotedly working under her ideals for more than sixty years.

Swamiji radically condemned the gratuitous male intervention in female affairs: ‘Educate your women first and leave them to themselves; then they will tell you what reforms are

necessary for them.’¹¹ He, as it were, saw the uplift of women as a precondition for social progress. His idea was: ‘Women must be put in a position to solve their own problems in their own way’ (5.229). As men rose and enjoyed freedom, so women should rise and enjoy the same. Both should be on an equal footing for a healthy social progress. Yet, it appears that Swamiji’s concern for women was bigger, as he thought there was no regeneration of the world without the application of the woman-power in its fullest measure. And he was convinced too that Sri Sarada Devi was born for this revival. He initiated the work for women by placing her at the centre for inspiration and progress.

Swamiji’s crusade against the neglect of women and Swami Shivananda’s insight into the Holy Mother’s life and teachings has proved correct. During the last century the whole world has indubitably seen huge developments in the lives of urban and rural women. India has offered many new openings for weaker sections of society to rise up. The panchayat system, which is bringing women to the forefront, is a good example of social change. Many sensible men are now crusading for women’s empowerment. These men, together with many organizations, have been able to bring large numbers of rural women into the fold of literacy and also make them conscious of their equal rights and privileges guaranteed by the Constitution of India. Many women organizations have also been formed in villages with the aim of developing welfare activities for women. These organizations are now becoming increasingly vocal against the crimes and injustices perpetrated against women. In the light of such a positive mood of transition, women should be able to once again win their ancient legitimate claims and pick up the pace in humanity’s march towards divinity. 

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Compassion in the Diamond Sutra and the 'Sermon on the Mount'

Bob Stewart

COMPASSION HAS GREAT potential when seeking a common denominator across religions. This discussion will draw on two primary sources from my own understanding of compassion as the main point of life. The first is Buddha's teachings generally, with particular attention to the *Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita Sutra*, or the *Diamond Sutra*, where the focus is on mastering our minds by addressing the illusions that are barriers to generosity and compassion. The second is the life of Jesus, who addresses the same issue in a different way. Jesus embodied compassion itself, which flowed from his oneness with God, who is love. His teaching found in the 'Sermon on the Mount' provides nuanced facets of compassion and points us away from the external towards the internal as the key to an authentic life of compassion.

Buddha and Jesus both pointed to love and compassion as core characteristics of a life lived in harmony and with the deepest wisdom. Love, compassion, and justice-seeking will flow naturally in our lives if we remove the inner obstacles. Their life was devoted to liberating all beings from ignorance and inner obstacles, which are the source of our suffering and the barriers to living an abundant life.

Compassion

Virtually all Christians of any persuasion, regardless of how they view the Bible or how they answer metaphysical questions about God and the ultimate Reality, would find unanimity in

the view that authentic Christianity is reflected in commitments to love, compassion, and justice. When Jesus was asked: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself."¹

Metaphysical differences or personal uncertainties do not have to be resolved for us to embrace the certitude of love, compassion, and justice. For believers within any religion, how we understand our faith and the rituals, symbols, and words with which we express our faith, are less relevant than the questions about how we become people of love, compassion, and justice, and how we can help others reflect these qualities in their lives and in their relationships. This was the emphasis of Buddha and it was the emphasis of Jesus as well.

At the core of all religions is a spiritual well-spring that flows from an ecstatic experience of a common source of eternal love, compassion, and justice. And when each of us, regardless of our particular religious perspective, seeks to understand the core, the spiritual origin of our own tradition, we *are* understanding the core and well-spring of *all other* traditions. To focus on compassion, which encompasses love and justice, is to remove the barriers that divide us and also to remove the distractions that divert our lives from our central purpose for being.

There are three different elements involved in growing in love, compassion, and justice.

Knowledge • The CBS '60 Minutes' programme, which aired on 19 May 2013, consisted of an interview with a young North Korean man who was born in a remote concentration camp for thousands of political non-conformists. He grew up living separately from his parents, who were also at the concentration camp and with no concept of what love is. He told of informing his captors of a violation of rules by his mother and brother and then witnessed their being publicly executed. At the time this seemed perfectly normal to him, and he experienced no grief about their death or remorse for his own actions. Only after escaping the gulag and coming to the West did he begin to develop a new consciousness.²

While this is an extreme example, knowledge is *one* prerequisite for discovering love, compassion, and justice as the focus of our lives. Stories about Jesus's life of love and compassion; St Paul's great chapter on love, which ends with 'And now abides hope, faith and love, but the greatest of these is love'³; the example of Francis of Assisi; the example and words of the great Old Testament prophets of justice; the commitments of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr; the teachings of the Vedas, the Bhagavad-gita, and the *Dhammapada*; the insights of Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda; our own experience of love from parents and partners and others; and through countless other ways we can gain knowledge of what love, compassion, and justice are. Knowledge is an essential element; however, knowledge *by itself* is not sufficient to transform ourselves as people of love, compassion, and justice.

Attitude • Is a second prerequisite for lives of love, compassion, and justice. Our attitudes are reflected in our habits and automatic reactions that profoundly influence what we do with

our knowledge or how we see others. This includes our ingrained biases, attachments, aversions, and unexamined assumptions that literally determine what we see and hear and certainly how we interpret the knowledge we have.

Behaviour • The third element is more a product of knowledge and attitude and must be viewed interdependently. Behaviour is what we do, how we act, but as the sole focus of our attention it will likely be ineffective. We can make a determined effort to carry out behaviours associated with love, compassion, and justice, but these behaviours devoid of changed knowledge and attitudes may lack authenticity and we will likely be unable to sustain behaviours that do not flow from a deep source within.

Therefore, to become a person whose life is characterized by true love, compassion, and justice and to be of help to others in seeking to become people of compassion, we must find a way to make positive and synchronous changes in our interrelated knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours. Making these changes is possible, but probably not without the guidance and support of others, because it takes real commitment to such a path. We need spiritual guides and we need satsang. There is probably no substitute for some form of regular meditation or contemplation and reading and absorbing the deep spiritual teachings of the great sages and mystics.

Buddha and Jesus provide the kind of guidance we need for becoming people of deeper and deeper compassion. We will examine Buddha's teaching in the *Diamond Sutra* and in Jesus's teaching in the 'Sermon on the Mount'.

The Diamond Sutra

The *Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita Sutra* contains a profoundly important message from Buddha. Distilling its message is difficult, as to truly penetrate its meaning is a never-ending process. Thick

Nhat Hanh's commentary on this sutra, titled *Diamond Sutra that Cuts through Illusion*, is very insightful and is reflected upon in this discussion.⁴

The emphasis of the title is on the cutting capability of the diamond. The sutra is a diamond that can cut through illusions and afflictions and bring us to liberation. This is considered to be one of the earliest sutras of Buddha. The discourse was given to 1,250 monks, the bodhisattvas, who seek to help other beings become aware. The monks are committed to a life of compassion; Buddha's words are designed to help them fulfil this aspiration.

The sutra is in the form of a dialogue between Buddha and the venerable Subhuti, a loyal student. The sutra is Buddha's response to a question by Subhuti: 'World-Honoured One, if sons and daughters of good families want to give rise to the highest, the most fulfilled, awakened mind, what should they rely on and what should they do to master their thinking?' (7) This frames the exchange between Subhuti and Buddha, which in a variety of ways cuts through core illusions for the purpose of clarifying where our mind should take refuge and how we can master our thinking so that we can live a life of true compassion.

The first response of the Buddha is related to the vow of the bodhisattva to bring happiness to all living beings. He says: 'However many species of living beings there are—whether born from eggs, from the womb, from moisture, or spontaneously; whether they have form or do not have form; whether they have perceptions or do not have perceptions; or whether it cannot be said of them that they have perceptions or that they do not have perceptions, we must lead all these beings to the ultimate nirvana so that they may be liberated' (ibid.). All living beings must be led to become awake, enlightened, so that the cause of their afflictions can be uprooted and they can become totally free. And Buddha

makes clear that when he speaks of living beings, he is all-encompassing and does not confine his scope only to human beings. So Buddha emphasizes on the objective to lead all living beings to become awake.

This first statement is straightforward and in the form of an injunction. But what the Buddha says next turns the injunction on its head and sets the pattern for the exchange between Buddha and Subhuti that follows throughout the sutra. The Buddha says: 'And when this innumerable, infinite number of beings has become liberated, we do not, in truth, think that a single being has been liberated' (ibid.). Thich Nhat Hanh calls this the 'first flash of lightning' (43) in the sutra, and it goes to the heart of the *Diamond Sutra* by presenting the principle of 'formlessness'. This is the beginning point of Buddha's encouraging us to love and support all living beings. Authentic love and compassion, for which Buddha will use the word 'generosity', happens naturally and spontaneously, without distinguishing between the one who is helping and the one who is helped.

Authentic love or compassion is as natural as breathing. To carry out actions in a spirit of form is to be focused on 'I' the helper helping the one who needs help; it is focused on an outcome for which I deserve credit. Formlessness means helping without the *idea* of helping; we feel the need to do it and do it without regard for the outcome. Thich Nhat Hanh calls this the principle of 'inter-being': we coexist or are mutually interdependent. We then cannot say we are liberated or that others are liberated because we simply are—compassion is a natural response. When beings become liberated, Buddha says: 'We do not, in truth, think that a single being has been liberated.'

Then the Buddha makes another far-reaching statement about the illusions that are the key barriers to being people of love, compassion, and



This copy of the Diamond Sutra, found in cave 17, Dunhuang, China, is the world's earliest complete survival of a dated printed book (868 CE)

justice. He says: 'If, Subhuti, a bodhisattva holds on to the idea that a self, a person, a living being, or a life span exists, that person is not an authentic bodhisattva' (8). The following is a brief clarification of these four illusions.

The first illusion is that we are a 'self' separate from a permanent, changeless identity. This is the small self, the ego. Buddha says this is our first illusion. What we call 'I' or the 'self' is a creation of our minds, and if we really think about it, we will find that our idea of a self has no substance in reality. The self is an illusion. Thich Nhat Hanh speaks of 'the sword of conceptualization' (70) that we use to cut reality into pieces. We use our conceptual swords to name and label phenomena or perceptions and thereby create in our minds the notion that they are separate. When we set ourselves against these conceptually created pieces of reality, we call one part 'I' and the rest 'not I'. This, Buddha says, is our first illusion.

The concept of 'person' is the second illusion that we create with our conceptual sword. We can call ourselves a person only by erecting a barrier between the idea of a person and the idea of a non-person and set ourselves, as a person, apart. In so doing we delude ourselves. The notion of separation of ourselves as a person from non-persons is only an illusion created by our minds, which results in our losing awareness that we are with all things.

The third illusion the Buddha identifies is the concept of a 'living being,' which arises when we separate living beings from non-living beings. In reality, what we call the non-living makes what we call living beings possible. As Thich Nhat Hanh writes: 'If we destroy the non-living, we also destroy the living' (47). Authentic love and compassion includes both living and non-living beings, because I am inseparable from all that is. Buddha pushes us towards the unity of all things and away from our self-focus.

The last illusion is ‘lifespan’, by which we mean the length of life that begins at birth and ends at death. According to the *Prajnaparamita Sutra*, life and death are one. We are born and die every second of our life. Death is necessary for life to be. Thich Nhat Hanh comments that it is our erroneous ideas about life and death that cause us unwarranted worry, dread, and anxiety. Death is not the opposite of birth; birth is not the opposite of death; death is inseparable from life and life is inseparable from death.

One of the interesting characteristics of Western culture is the aversion to death. Obituaries are filled with references to how the deceased ‘battled’ an illness but lost. Persons diagnosed with cancer are culturally required to demonstrate that they have ‘fought’ the illness, and many die feeling their death is their own failure. People grow old and at some point appear to be genuinely ‘surprised’ to learn that they are going to die. We spend huge sums of money on special concoctions, fitness clubs, running shoes and other clothing, and unwarranted diagnostic procedures as strategies to prolonging life or avoiding death. We eagerly read the latest pop science article reporting that a particular food or food supplement protects against cancer and immediately change our diet; and then a few years later science says the opposite and we search for the next protection against death. Buddha seeks to free us from viewing life and death as a duality. When we view ourselves as existing in a span of time that begins at birth and ends in death, we create an illusion that makes the idea of our existence shallow, and this is the source of immense anxiety and foolish living. Avoiding the duality of life and death will change how we live. With a touch of humour Buddha says: ‘There are those that forget that death comes to all; for those who remember, quarrels come to an end.’⁵

What drives all of this is the first illusion, the notion of the ego self. The idea of the self drives us

to seek to build a strong self-image and to acquire the symbols of success and importance. These forms and signs and symbols simply reinforce the illusion of the self and we lose sight of who we really are. We literally define ourselves in terms of college degrees and certificates and the car we drive and the neighbourhood we live in and the labels on the clothes we wear. And this becomes our immortality project—building a self-image that will live on beyond our illusive lifespan. And if we have enough money, we create funds or edifices that carry our name in order to ensure our immortality. These are our personal pyramids.

What a waste it is to live our lives oblivious to the difference between what is permanent and what is temporary, what is not subject to change and what changes. How sad it is for us to cut the marvellous oneness of our existence into conceptual pieces that we label and then lose awareness of what each facet of existence actually is. Buddha seeks to bring us back to the clarity of the oneness of all things, to save us from the suffering that flows from our blind illusions of a self, a person, a living being, and a lifespan. This is the principle of *formlessness*.

Buddha goes on: ‘Moreover, Subhuti, when a bodhisattva practices generosity, he does not rely on any object—that is to say he does not rely on any form, sound, smell, taste, tactile object, or dharma—to practice generosity.’⁶ Again, we can substitute love, compassion, and justice for ‘generosity’. This is the spirit of *signlessness* in not distinguishing between ourselves and other phenomena. Our perceptions are based on what we see, hear, smell, taste, touch, and the objects of our mind. These are ‘signs’ from which we create distinctions and separations and get caught up in them. So Buddha is calling us to formlessness and signlessness in order to become truly awake.

We now know from science that the formerly held view of matter as stable is erroneous. Any

mass of matter, whether rock, iron, or wood, is composed of countless molecules that are, in turn, composed of countless atomic and sub-atomic particles, all of which are held together by electromagnetic and nuclear forces. Atoms are vast empty spaces in which infinitely small particles are in perpetual motion at an enormous speed. We have come to realize through science that our conceptualized world is an illusion. Buddha made this same point based on his focus on the inner world of the mind. To practise love, compassion, and justice we must go beyond wrong perceptions that create duality.

The insight of the true bodhisattva is no longer based on concepts or perceptions but on wisdom or understanding beyond signs. This is the difference in perceiving a person or object as they truly are, rather than within the boundaries and limitations of the sign or concept we assign to them. Once we realize that nothing exists separate from everything else that is, we will begin to develop a deeper understanding of what we perceive. Thich Nhat Hanh illustrates this truth by asking us to think about the one we love. If we look deeply, we will see that he or she is not a separate entity that we can understand as standing alone but is a composite of culture, society, heredity, parents, education, and all the things that contribute to his or her being. If we look deeply at the one we love and see that this person is not the person we hold in our mind, then and only then are we able to see the other person in his or her fullest flowering.

We tend to think we should *try* to love, *try* to be compassionate, *try* to seek justice. Or we display the current cultural signs and symbols of love, compassion, and justice—such as a bumper sticker or a peace sign—so that we will be identified as people of love and compassion. This approach will ultimately fail. Only right thoughts, a right heart, will lead to right action. If I can view all living and non-living beings without

form or signs, I will live with love and compassion as naturally as I breathe.

Subhuti's original question to the Buddha was: 'What should they—the bodhisattvas—rely on and what should they do to master their thinking?' The Buddha's answer clarified that when we see only form, we cannot touch the substance. Where there is sign, there is illusion. When there is perception, there is deception. Only when I no longer think of my 'I' showing love and compassion to another, am I authentically loving and being compassionate. Only within the principle of formlessness and the spirit of signlessness can we give rise to our highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind; only then do we truly become people of love, compassion, and justice. Buddha says that if you want to be able to show generosity, this is the way in which you must master your thinking.

Does this mean that we first withdraw from life in order to master our thinking? Does it mean that we withhold love and compassion and justice-seeking until we are sure it is real? Does it mean that we avoid the risk of inauthenticity by simply doing nothing? No, what it means is that we must seek day by day to live guided by the wisdom of the *Diamond Sutra*. To do so will enrich our relationships and move us progressively towards living naturally with compassion, love, and self-seeking. Buddha's way is to master our thoughts, which mould and form us and determine how we perceive. Just pondering the four illusions of self, person, living being, and lifespan will gradually transform our thinking. It will change how we see ourselves and others; it will change how we view death; it will change how we think of happiness; it will change our idea of the teachings we follow—the dharma—from an end in itself to a raft that takes us to the shore of true wisdom and happiness.

(To be concluded)

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Is God Unfair?

Rajshree and Raghunath Deshmukh

WHILE GOING THROUGH difficult phases of life many people think: 'Why is this happening to me? Why is God doing this to me? I did so much good for others but still, why are such bad things happening? There are lots of people doing so many bad things, so why is God not punishing them?'

These are basic questions that rise in the minds of many people at different periods of their lives. Down the ages the various philosophies and religions of the world have tried to provide answers to the complexities of human life and also to those in search of mental peace. The most common answers people receive to these questions are, 'it is God's wish' or 'God wanted this for you to remember him'. These answers lead to further questions, like: 'Why me and not others? Is God guilty of injustice? Is God unfair?' These are not really answers or questions but a different way of saying 'I don't know'. Yet, if these issues are not properly answered, people start doubting their religious beliefs and turn into non-believers. So, is there a definitive answer?

Hinduism's View

Hinduism, as well as other religions and philosophies that originated in India, believes in the doctrine of karma. According to this doctrine, the results of a person's actions comes back to him or her. What we get in life is earned by us; part of it is from this life and the remaining part from earlier lives. We are born to spend the karma accumulated in earlier lives, and while spending accumulated karma we end up creating new ones, which lead us in turn to take additional births. Thus this cycle of birth and death, known as *samsara*, continues for a long time. The problems we have in our lives are created by us, there is nobody else to blame. If we want to exhaust our karma, there is nobody but ourselves who need to act responsibly. In a sense God is being very fair in this whole exercise by giving us what we earned.

If a person has accumulated a lot of good karma, he or she would have a life according to that karma, probably a happy and comfortable life. In contrast, if a person has accumulated a lot of bad karma, his or her life will be tough and painful. Most people generally have a mixture of

good and bad accumulated karma, which leads to a life replete with good and bad experiences. In fact, the human body is a result of both good and bad karma. And this mixture of karma synchronizes with the world, which also is a mixture of good and bad.

As conscious beings we need to think, speak, and act. According to Hinduism, the law of karma unerringly operates and binds us in these areas. This bondage, seen from a different perspective, is the cause of our development. All human and social development is due to the law of karma. Every thought, word, and deed, takes us forwards because of the law of cause and effect. If we can do karma rightly, we keep evolving faster, but if we do it wrongly, we arrest our own evolution.

When we try and understand karma by breaking it down to its component parts, we see only a small aspect from our standpoint; we miss out seeing the large picture in doing so. The law of karma is vast, complex, and has innumerable ramifications. It holds each and every being in its grip. No one lives in a bubble; we are all interconnected. Our karma affects others and others' karma also affects us. This web of interconnect-edness is mind-boggling and it connects us with all life. So, just as there is individual karma, there is also collective karma affecting us.

Can we completely stop doing work to avoid generating good or bad effects? The answer is: we cannot stop doing work even for a second, nor is it advisable. Trying to stop working is not the solution, as we need to work to sustain our bodies and minds. The solution lies in continuing to work, for it is karma that breaks other karmas—a higher karma breaks a lower karma. The law of karma is not the law of fatalism but of freedom. The sage Patanjali teaches: 'Good and bad deeds are not the direct causes in the transformations of nature, but they act as breakers of obstacles to the evolution of nature, as a farmer breaks the

obstacles to the course of water, which then runs down by its own nature.'¹

We need to realize that karma is not the final answer for everything, otherwise there would be perpetual bondage; we would not be able to come out of the loop of lives and deaths and attain moksha, Self-realization, which, according to Hinduism, is the goal of life. There is another power in us called *purushakara*, conscious self-effort. This power makes us work as free agents. The stronger the conscious efforts, the quicker we progress and move aside the bonds of karma.

There are yet other philosophical details that let us correctly understand the doctrine of karma. *Prarabdha* karma is the results of past actions that have formed the present body of a person and has begun bearing fruits. This *prarabdha* is extracted from the *sanchita* or *anarabdha* karma; it is the result of all the karma accumulated from earlier lives, which is generally huge and destined to fructify in future lives. *Agami* or *agamini* karma, is the result of actions done in the present life, which is due to accrue in the future. The result of karma lies as *samskaras*, impressions, in the *chitta*, mind-stuff.

There are three types of karma and its results: black or bad, white or good, and a mixture of the two. Swami Vivekananda explains: 'Only those desires will come out for which the environment is fitted; the rest will remain stored up. In this life we have many godly desires, many human desires, many animal desires. If I take a god body, only the good desires will come up, because for them the environments are suitable. And if I take an animal body, only the animal desires will come up, and the good desires will wait. ... Only that Karma which is suited to and fitted for the environments will come out.'²

If we want to come out of the cycle of lives and deaths, we need to use our *purushakara* to rise higher. Desire and selfishness are the motor

that drive the law of karma. If we want to become karma yogis, we must be able to work without desire and attachment to the fruits of work; as Swamiji says ‘work for work’s sake.’ Those who believe in a personal God can dedicate all works and all results to him. Those who undertake prayers and sadhana can and do slowly attenuate the past karma. Clearing the *sanchita* karma accumulated across various births is only possible when one realizes God, or the Atman. This is the state of *mukti*, liberation. The *agami* karma then becomes functionless, as there are no more desires, and the *sanchita* karmas are burnt by the realization. This state is called the *dagdha bija*, burnt seed, in which karma samskaras can no longer sprout and bear fruit. The *prarabdha* karma that gave rise to the body continues till its exhaustion, but one is no more affected by it because one’s identification is with God and not with one’s body and mind.

The Knowledge of the Gunas

How we react in each situation is determined by the three *gunas*—*sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*—which our mind and body are constituted of. These *gunas* are the constituents of Prakriti, from which the whole universe with its diverse names and forms, has emerged. The predominance of one of these *gunas* is determined by our *prarabdha* karma. The three *gunas* have innumerable permutations and combinations, and this is the reason why every person is different and reacts to different situations differently. *Sattva guna* is characterized by happiness, knowledge, and light and makes us kind, considerate, and helpful to others; *rajas* is passion, attachment, and restlessness, which makes us egotistic, self-centred, worldly, and pleasure-seeking; *tamas* is darkness, ignorance, and delusive, making us wicked, lazy, and confused. Depending upon which *guna* predominates at each stage or at every minute of life, we act and are judged by others accordingly.

When *rajas* and *tamas* predominate, we find it difficult to work towards Self-realization. Most of the time we are so engrossed in our own lives that we do not even make an effort to understand how the *gunas* shape our personality; not to speak of working towards improving our situation. We accept to live a puppet’s life in the hands of these *gunas* and die only to be born again to suffer the same situation.

The first step towards Self-realization is to understand the *gunas* and then work towards cultivating *sattva guna*. And what could be an easier way to cultivate *sattva guna* than doing good to others? Doing good attenuates selfishness and makes us more selfless. We need to make an effort to start doing good to others, without the least hankering for any results, until it becomes part of our nature. If one believes in God, one can also perform sincere spiritual practices like praying for others. Offering the fruits of all our work to God slowly releases us from the chains of cause and effect. As it is said in the Bhagavad-gita, ‘O Arjuna, as a blazing fire reduces pieces of wood to ashes, similarly the fire of knowledge reduces all actions to ashes.’³ Once a person has conviction in karma yoga, the supreme Being or one’s expanded consciousness becomes the guide. Then, with time, one finds oneself surrounded by conditions that are conducive towards the development of *sattva guna*, and the performance of the basic principles stated earlier becomes easier. There are moments when we think we are not able to make it, but we just need to keep trying through *abhyasa yoga*, the yoga of practice, and help and success will surely come.

Once we are on the path, there may arise other obstacles like vanity, desire for money, seeking people’s attention, and for some even the development of occult powers. We have to check these obstacles and prevent them from coming in the way of our progress. These hurdles can be

taken as tests to gauge our conviction, to see if we are following the path of karma yoga to achieve anything other than the final goal. We need to be very careful not to fall into these temptations and continue the journey. The path is not easy, but it is not impossible either.

In the Gita, Arjuna asks Sri Krishna what happens to people who die before they reach the final destination or miss their way. Sri Krishna replies: 'O Partha, there is certainly no ruin for him here or hereafter. For, no one engaged in good meets with a deplorable end, my son' (6.40). We start from where we left off after an intermission.

Basic Principles of Karma Yoga

Sri Ramakrishna says: 'Suppose a man has a thorn in the sole of his foot. He gets another thorn and takes out the first one.'⁴ One has to use karma to remove karma; this path of Self-realization is called karma yoga. The principles of karma yoga are taught in the Gita, in various Upanishads, and also in discourses of numerous great souls.

Below are given two of the important principles of karma yoga.

(i) Perform Your Duty • According to this principle, one must perform one's prescribed work—or duty as we call it—cheerfully and wholeheartedly, without any laziness or inefficiency. What is the prescribed work for each person? To answer this let us take some help from Swami Vivekananda's *Karma Yoga*. As suggested by him, there is no one duty prescribed for all the people in the world; the prescribed work is in accordance to place, time, and situation. Therefore, there is no common and single definition to give here. There are, however, some guiding principles we can derive from various scriptures. First of all, we have a duty as human beings with regard to other living beings. Then there is a duty towards this Earth, one's country, the place one lives, including respect for the law of the local

land, and so forth. There is also the duty towards one's spouse, children, parents, friends, relatives, and society, which is moulded according to local traditions and customs. One needs to derive one's duty from guidelines like these and then perform them cheerfully and wholeheartedly.

Many a time people are worried more about others' duties than their own, as they always have an excuse for not doing it. But this first principle of karma yoga requires us to perform our own duty without worrying about others' duties. Part of the problem lies in people categorizing duties as superior and inferior; they want to perform only those activities that they or others consider better or superior. For example, cleaning toilets is considered by many as an inferior duty, while practising philosophy, law, or medicine are considered superior duties. This is not true, as all activities are of equal importance. What really matters is 'how' one performs an activity, whatever it may be. If a cleaner does his or her work wholeheartedly and cheerfully while a doctor does not, karma yoga considers the cleaner more advanced in the path of karma yoga than the doctor. Karma yoga considers that according to place, time, and circumstances all duties are equally important, and therefore we need not choose between them on the basis of what other people think of them.

One of the ways to understand this concept of duty is through the story of the *vyadha*, hunter, in the Mahabharata. A learned young ascetic practised hard austerities in a forest for a number of years. He developed some psychic powers, which made him proud. Once, while on his begging rounds, he was ungraciously put in his place by a lady who had become illumined by doing her duties. She then told the young ascetic that if he wished to learn more, he should meet a *vyadha*. The ascetic went in search of the *vyadha* and was disgusted to find him cutting and selling

meat. The butcher had attained supreme Knowledge through karma yoga. After receiving the *vyadha's* teachings the young ascetic asked him:

‘Why are you in that body? With such knowledge as yours why are you in a Vyadha’s body, and doing such filthy, ugly work?’ ‘My son,’ replied the Vyadha, ‘no duty is ugly, no duty is impure. My birth placed me in these circumstances and environments, and I try to do my duty well. ... I neither know your Yoga, nor have I become a Sannyasin, nor did I go out of the world into a forest; nevertheless, all that you have heard and seen has come to me through the unattached doing of the duty which belongs to my position.’⁵

The butcher’s work was not an obstacle for attaining the highest knowledge, as that work was the natural one that came to him. The essence of the story is that it is the manner and method in which we perform our duty that is important.

(ii) Performing Duty without Motive

When we start performing our duties to the best of our abilities, we have taken the first step towards Self-realization. But if we perform these duties for our own benefit, we will be generating *agami* karma. In order to avoid this, we need to perform these duties without a selfish motive. This may sound frightening, as most people are motivated to work because of the results or the pleasure they derive from working. And this, in fact, is the most difficult aspect of karma yoga. The whole secret is in constantly checking the attitude and motive with which one works. Am I doing this selfishly? Am I doing this for a higher cause? This is the way to check the attitude towards one’s work.

Most of us fail to do this as we find it almost impossible to work without a motive. However, if we believe in God, the path becomes easier. When one believes in a supreme Being, one can simply understand that the whole universe belongs to him and we only offer, through devotion,

the work and its results to that Being. But for those who do not believe in God, they need to constantly train their minds to work towards performing all their duties for duty’s sake. They need to consciously remove the sense of ‘me and mine’ from their minds. There is no reason for people who do not believe in God not to attain moksha, provided they have determination and perform their activities by following these principles.

Besides karma yoga, there are other paths in Hinduism, like bhakti yoga, raja yoga, or jnana yoga. A path or a combination of paths is to be chosen according to our individual constitution—physical, mental, and spiritual. There is no path superior to another, as one can achieve the goal through all the paths.

Bhakti yoga demands from us to have an unconditional devotion to the supreme Being, in such a way that our minds are always thinking of our Ishta Devata, Chosen Ideal, even while performing our daily activities. In raja yoga we need to shut all the external doors of our body, our senses, and concentrate on the internal Being in order to be in constant communion with it. Jnana yoga needs a person to have clear discernment based on high spiritual knowledge, to thus understand that Brahman alone is real and the world is like an illusion.

Whatever path we chose, if we follow it sincerely, we can be ‘fairly’ certain that God will be with us.



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Mahayana and Zen Buddhism

Dr Amartya Kumar Bhattacharya

ZEN IS THE ABBREVIATION of the Japanese word *zenna* or *zenno*. It refers to a meditative absorption in which all dualism such as I and you, subject and object, true and false are eliminated. Zen Buddhism first flourished in China and is now popular all over the world. It is an offshoot of Mahayana, great vehicle, Buddhism, which was propagated in China by Buddhist monks from India. Kumarajiva (344–413 CE) went to China in 401, and Buddhahadra (359–429) in 408. Chinese Buddhists also came to India to study this doctrine and then spread it back home. Fa-hsien, or Fa-xian, came to India between 399 and 414 CE, and Hsuan-tsang, or Xuan-zang, between 633 and 643 CE. The Indian monk Gunabhadra was the first to translate the *Lankavatara Sutra* into Chinese. Another noted translator was Paramartha.

The philosophical basis of Mahayana Buddhism developed in India a few centuries after Buddha's *parinirvana*. The Buddhist Emperor Kanishka convened in 100 CE the Fourth Buddhist Council of the Sarvastivada tradition at Jalandhar, or Kashmir, in which the great scholar

Vasumitra presided along with Ashvaghosha, another eminent scholar and the author of the *Buddhacharita*. A schism took place at this Council that divided the Buddhists into the two branches of Mahayana and Theravada. The Pali word *thera* is derived from the Sanskrit *sthavira*, which means elder. Theravada Buddhism is the orthodox form of Buddhism and has preserved the historical teachings of Buddha. The Theravada sutras in Pali are the earliest available historical teachings of Buddha. The Pali canon, known as the *Tripitaka* in Sanskrit and the *Tipitaka* in Pali, consists of three parts: *Sutra-Pitaka*, *Vinaya-Pitaka*, and *Abhidharma-Pitaka*.

Mahayana

In Mahayana Buddhism enlightened individuals, called Bodhisattvas, strive to take all other beings along with them to the ultimate goal: nirvana. Mahayana Buddhism emerged as the development of different readings of concepts related to sangha, dharma, and Buddha.

The first stirring of the dispute was regarding ideas of the sangha. The primary concern of

Buddhist monks was to keep the dharma and the *vinaya*, discipline, pure. They felt that this was the only way to sustain Buddhism in the long run. But some other monks wanted the *vinaya* to be flexible. The case of *mahasanghika* monks is the best example of the conflict between the two viewpoints. These monks had added ten minor precepts for their group; for example, monks could obtain, keep, and use money. In the Second Buddhist Council, held at Vaishali, these monks were called *pāpishtha bhikkhus*, sinful monks. Their behaviour was unacceptable by the orthodox school. Later these monks established their own tradition and called themselves *mahasanghikas*, the monks of the great sangha.

Controversies also appeared regarding dharma. Three months before Buddha's *parinirvana* at Kushinagara, he declared that the monks and the laity would have the dharma and the *vinaya* as their leaders in the future—this is in the *Mahaparinirvana Sutra*. However, after the dispute about the sangha, some Buddhists, mostly the *mahasanghikas*, found themselves having no shelter except the dharma. Therefore, they searched for the true meaning of dharma. The statement of Buddha, 'He who sees the Dharma, sees me; He who sees me, sees the Dharma,'¹ also supported their quest. If one uses logical arguments to judge this sentence, an interesting question emerges: How must one see the dharma so that one also sees Buddha? For some Buddhist scholars, even today, dharma is not merely the sermons of Buddha. His life contains more latent implications, like his silence in certain contexts—for example, his silence in response to questions by Vacchagotra. Thus for these Buddhist monks, dharma was something more than what Buddha spoke. The sermons are merely a part of him, not the totality. These Buddhists monks shifted the ethical facet of Buddhism to the metaphysical level. And what they did was to seek out the

truest dharma, one that also revealed the status of Buddha after his *parinirvana*.

Simultaneously, the assumption that Buddha still existed pervaded and caught the faithful minds of Buddhists. Dharma turned out to be a means to reach the state of Buddha. When one realizes the ultimate truth of all things, one is sure to free oneself from all types of bondage. To see dharma is to see the truth of phenomena. When the truth of phenomena is seen, the wisdom of Buddha rises within oneself. That is the reason why when one sees the dharma, one also sees Buddha. Further, that state of the mind is linked to liberation. The state of liberation is conceived to be the same as the pure mind. A human mind that is pure and detached from all types of impurities is synonymous with the state of liberation. There were also groups that defined dharma as the ultimate truth of Buddha.

The more these Buddhists investigated Buddha's life, the less they believed that he had gone away. Hence, to see dharma is to see Buddha's power penetrating through all things. These groups also tended to relate dharma to Buddha's *mahakaruna*, great compassion, and felt that to see dharma is to see the Buddha-*dhatu*, substance, within oneself. *Mahakaruna* is *karuna*, compassion, combined with *prajna*, wisdom. Clearly, the most important duty of an individual is to live and spend life in accordance with Buddha's intention, which was to liberate all sentient beings from suffering. In order to realize the Buddha-*dhatu* within oneself, it is crucial that one has also to assist other sentient beings and take them along to nirvana. *Prajna* is vital, because different *upayas*, expedient means, should be employed to bring sentient beings on the path to *bodhi*, enlightenment. Thus the concept of the Bodhisattva sprang up from this attitude.

Differences also occurred regarding the understanding of Buddha. When the *vinaya*

and the dharma showed fault lines, the only way out for some Buddhists was to go back to Buddha as refuge. At that time many Buddhists conceived the existence of Buddha in the transcendental state. The *Saddharma Pundarika Sutra*, Lotus Sutra, a Mahayana scripture, conceives of a transcendental Buddha. Buddha had returned to his universal form after his *parinirvana*, and he still exists. Buddha has three bodies, *trikaya*. The first and most fundamental body is called *dharmakaya*, cosmic body. The conceptualization of Buddha's all-pervading, eternal, omniscient, omnipresent, and radiant *dharmakaya* provided for an intense and immersive spiritual experience. The nature of the *dharmakaya* is called *dharmakaya-dhatu*. During deep meditation the state of Buddha is his blissful body, *sambhogakaya*. The third body is the *nirmanakaya*, constructed body, which signifies the historical Buddha. The *nirmanakaya* of Buddha had come and gone under the will of the *dharmakaya*. He was born to fulfil his human functions in leading human beings to liberation. It is believed that as long as humankind does not realize the true dharma, the anguish of separation from Buddha takes place. And when the human mind is able to make the distinction between the pure mind and the *kleshas*, painful impurities, the Buddha-dhatu becomes clear. The concept of *rupakaya* existed among the *mahasanghikas*, and this *rupakaya* was later split into *nirmanakaya* and *sambhogakaya* in Mahayana Buddhism.

Mahayana Buddhism combines *shraddha*, faith and devotion, with the wisdom of logical reasoning. This is the appeal of Mahayana Buddhism.

Zen

Zen Buddhist masters are found even among the laity, but Zen's greatest geniuses were found in the highly regulated life of the monasteries.

From the vast Chinese land mass Zen Buddhism slowly spread to Korea and onwards to Japan.

According to Buddhist legends, Buddha taught, apart from his orthodox teachings, special techniques to a few. The famous discourse of Buddha on the vulture mountain to a host of assembled monks is important in Zen. It is said that Buddha just held up a flower in his hand without speaking and only his close disciple Kashyapa understood and smiled. As a result of Buddha's gesture and silence, Kashyapa experienced a flash of enlightenment and grasped the essence of Buddha's teachings. This was the first instance of a heart-mind to heart-mind transmission. Kashyapa was thence known as Mahakashyapa and became the first Indian patriarch in the long guru-disciple line unbroken until now. In the sixth century Bodhidharma brought this lineage to China, where it was mixed with Taoism. Over the centuries many schools developed, but two of them, the Rinzai and the Soto, reached Japan in the twelfth century. In China the authentic transmission of the secret knowledge declined during the Sung dynasty (960–1279) and then got mixed up with Pure Land Buddhism during the Ming dynasty (1368–644). In Japan, however, the Zen traditions flourished.

The essential nature of Zen is summarized in four statements: (i) special teachings outside the orthodox teachings, (ii) non-dependence on sacred writings, (iii) direct pointing to the heart, and (iv) realization of one's nature and becoming a Buddha.

The Sanskrit word *dhyana* is a synonym of the Pali *jhana*, the Chinese *ch'an*, Vietnamese *thien*, Korean *son*, and the Japanese *zen*. In Zen Buddhist practice one can take the help of koans—*kung-an* in Chinese, *kongan* in Korean—spiritual puzzles, as an aid to propel the mind to a transcendental state in which one can meditate.

Zazen—*tso-ch'an* in Chinese—is the practice of Zen Buddhist meditation that leads to enlightenment. A koan is a phrase from a sutra or a teaching on realization. A koan is like a paradox, which transcends logical or conceptual thinking. Since it is not a riddle, a koan cannot be solved by reasoning. Solving a koan requires a leap to a higher level of consciousness. The role of the Zen Buddhist master is important here. The master can deliver a shock—an emotional one usually suffices, but a physical blow or other corporeal shock may be needed so that the spiritual aspirant is propelled into a higher level of consciousness. To give an example of a koan: 'Before enlightenment, chopping wood, carrying water. After enlightenment, chopping wood, carrying water.'²


The fundamental viewpoint of Zen Buddhism is that one has to concentrate directly on one's mind, seeing it as it is, *yatha bhutam*, and become a Buddha. A very important difference between Theravada Buddhism and Zen Buddhism is that the former believes that enlightenment is obtained gradually by means of practice, while the latter believes in sudden enlightenment, called *satori*.

The practices of Zen are directed towards self-realization and lead finally to complete awakening. It stresses the uselessness of rituals and intellectual discussions of the doctrines. It instead stresses on the practice of *zazen*, sitting in meditative absorption as the shortest but steepest way to awakening. They also cautiously state that *zazen* is not any particular method, as that will pin it down to something else. *Zazen* is a technique to free the mind from any thought-form, vision, thing, or representation. Zen masters even say that Zen is not a religion in the conventional sense, but an indefinable state free from concepts, names, and descriptions, which can be experienced only by each individual for himself or herself. Zen is the perfection

of everything existing, designated by various names, and experienced by all sages and saints in all cultures. Zen perfection is present in every individual; one just has to express it.

One of the central teachings of Mahayana Buddhism is to possess a *bodhi-chitta*, awakened mind. *Bodhi* does not change the *samsara* one is immersed in, but it does change and completely restructure one's attitude towards that *samsara*. In Hinayana, lesser vehicle, Buddhism,

bodhi is equated with perfection of insight into, and realization of, the four noble truths, which perfection means the cessation of suffering. ... By contrast, in Mahayana *bodhi* is mainly understood as wisdom based on insight into the unity of nirvana and *samsara* as well as of subject and object. It is described as the realization of *prajna*, awakening to one's own Buddha-nature (*busscho*), insight into the essential emptiness (*shunyata*) of the world, or omniscience and perception of suchness (*tathata*).³

A radical indeterminacy underpins and permeates human existence. Things happen that we do not want; things that we do not want happen. But instead of sitting and becoming fatalists Buddhism teaches one to bravely work out one's way to emancipation. One requires immense enlightened courage to bring order in place of chaos and to face life with fortitude. Zen enables us to bravely undertake this enlightened journey and to reach nirvana, which is free from all dualism and is the goal of Buddhism. 

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Modern Hinduism: Some Reflections

Subhasis Chattopadhyay

ONE ENCOUNTERS a vast array of religious practices and rituals in India. The main sects comprising of Shaktas, Shaivas, Vaishnavas, and Ganapatayas, and their sub-sects, have undergone immense transformation in the modern world. People today are discovering that behind Hinduism's numerous and often bewildering sects and practices is the Vedanta philosophy in its three stages of Dvaita, Vishishtadvaita, and Advaita. Modern educated people are veering towards these orthodox philosophies, but with a difference: they do not want the traditional interpretations, they prefer modern interpretations like those given by Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, and others. Moreover, many orthodox rituals and habits, though essentially unaltered, have been adapted by people themselves according to modern needs and times.

In the past there was friction between the various sects—this was also due to royal or political patronage or non-patronage. But with the advent of modern India, these frictions have fallen away. Imbued in the daily life of millions of people and their sacred rituals, Hinduism is diverse and complex. Yet, like every Kumbha Mela palpably shows in a microcosm, the various phases and aspects of Hinduism are thriving as a composite entity.

Whatever philosophy, mythology, and ritual one follows within Hinduism, the faith of the large community has no one language, no one book, no centralized authority, and no one source of doctrines. Its practitioners may appear bewildering to each other—leave alone the

devotees of other religions. In truth, Hinduism has only its loci of control to lead its votaries to God. These loci are principles regarding the universe, the soul, and God. And in recent decades these principles have attracted the attention of and generated debates from thinking people all over the world.

Changing Patterns

As Hinduism evolves with the times and adapts to new situations, the external forms change. For instance, there was a time when most Hindus practised the use of external religious signs on themselves, a practice that is no longer followed the modern workaday world—many even consider it ridiculous. Yet the reverence for religion has not undergone any fundamental change. At present the concept of dharma may not mean a specific cognitive space or may no longer be an area of discourse, which separates us from others or relegates the idea of the holy only to the realm of religion. Hinduism is a lived religion that sees the ambition for earning wealth, enjoyment, and fulfilling careers as natural—provided it does not disturb or exploit others—and integral to self-actualization. With regard to the attainment of the goal of life, the realization of God, both householders and renunciants have a distinctive place within Hinduism—the Upanishads and the Vedas, also called *apaurusheya*, not authored by anybody, relate the lived experience of non-celibates who were happily wedded seers, both women and men.

Those who seek in Hinduism magic for personal peace, for some sort of harmony and


certainty, seek in vain. Hindus know that to follow the spiritual life, until the final goal is reached, is to live in uncertainty; to desire holiness means tremendous struggles. The attitude of seeking miracles to find quick-fix solutions to real problems is not encouraged by seers, who generally recommend steady and continuous spiritual practices. To keep an indolent attitude in a world torn by strife is foolishness, is selfish. How can the so-called spiritual persons seek inaction and solipsism when countless around them are illiterate, hungry, and live in miserable conditions? Today's Hinduism rejects an indolent attitude in spiritual life as being unworthy of human beings. This world is not meant for growth—material, intellectual, or spiritual—at the expense of others; it is meant for action and relentless self-appraisal: Am I living my *svadharma*? Only after much incessant and unselfish service can metaphysics be pursued. Metaphysics is useless for the lazy and the shirker, who cannot improve their lives here and now by energetically doing some practical service for the benefit of society. It does not matter whether Advaita Vedanta is superior to Sri Ramanujacharya's metaphysics; what matters is whether one is prepared to do one's job at hand well and selflessly.

Today one seeks medical care if one has a problem and does not waste time seeking help from tantric practitioners. Similarly, undertakings and enterprises are planned by the people themselves and not by astrologers and palmists. Astrology and other future-oriented practices trap one in an ever-tightening grip of inaction. People have stopped running to a temple whenever they are in trouble, instead they try to figure out how they can overcome life's bottlenecks. Work has made people take the help of experts and delegate tasks, in contrast to the old days when work meant doing pujas or yajnas alone.

Science is employed to understand the world around us, instead of believing in some fanciful stories. Helping others tangibly is understood today as being really spiritual.

All metaphysics boils down to this: one is a free agent and it is up to one to change things and take actions. Today's karma determines what one will do in the future. People who give the excuse of *prarabdha* karma to justify their laziness are laughed at. Spiritual transformation is acknowledged to be the result of good actions, not theatrics or religious practices that have no bearing on life. As Swami Vivekananda said: 'My Master's [Ramakrishna's] message to mankind is "Be spiritual and realise truth for yourself"'¹

Howsoever brainy one may be, one needs love. Love is a verb too, but we conveniently use it only as a noun. One must learn to love. It is one thing to speak of loving all, and it is another thing to actually love all. One must express love for the family and for others equally. Otherwise one is fooling oneself. Love entails sacrifice, which is a spiritual quality.

Hinduism is a journey from ignorance to light, from darkness to knowledge. For most of us a fixed ultimate truth may, in itself, be an illusion. So one has to cut free from all dogmas, experiment with various truths—about oneself and God—and walk one's own spiritual path. This is the latitude given; religious freedom is given to all. Sri Ramakrishna says: 'All paths ultimately lead to the same Truth.'² 

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Advaitic Interpretation of the Atom's Emptiness

Harish Damodaran

QUANTUM MECHANICS has played a major role in making us understand the subtle nature of the world. This scientific discovery has been repeatedly verified in experiments, and aspects of it have also been successfully employed in modern technology. Yet it is very difficult to fully understand quantum mechanics in all its details, as it transcends our common notions of the world. The great physicist Richard Feynmann (1918–88) once said: 'If you think you understand quantum mechanics, you don't understand quantum mechanics.'¹ This amazing branch of physics is so superfine that it seems closer to philosophy and metaphysics than physics.

Model of the Atom

Neils Bohr (1885–1962), the famous Danish physicist, is well known as one of the architects of quantum mechanics. He interpreted and modified Ernest Rutherford's (1871–1937) planetary model of the atom. Even though Bohr's model was later challenged by Erwin Schrödinger's (1887–1961) probability wave equation, it still holds well in certain aspects. Physicists still use Bohr's atomic theory in order to obtain certain results that go in agreement with the particle nature

of electrons. And of course they use Schrödinger's theory to find results depending on the probability wave nature of the atom.

In 1913 Bohr made use of the then recent findings about the nature of energy to propose a model of the atom. In this model the subatomic particles of neutrons and protons are contained in a tiny dense nucleus, while the electrons are contained in defined spherical orbits. Bohr referred to these orbits as 'shells'. An electron that occupies the primary orbit was thought to be closer to the nucleus with less energy. The higher the shell, the higher the energy and more removed from the centre. Bohr said that energy, in the form of photons, must be *absorbed* in order for an electron to move from a lower energy level to a higher one, and is *emitted* when an electron travels from a higher energy level to a lower one.

The German physicist Werner Heisenberg (1901–76) produced his uncertainty principle in the 1920s. He stated that it is impossible to calculate at the same time the electron's location and its momentum in space.² One can only calculate the probability of finding an electron in a defined space. This transcended Bohr's atomic model by saying that electrons do not travel in

orbits or shells but act as a diffused cloud around the atom's nucleus.

In 1926 Schrödinger used equations to know the chance of finding an electron in a certain position. This came to be called the quantum mechanical model of the atom. Unlike the earlier Bohr's model, Schrödinger's model, pictured as a nucleus surrounded by a cloud of electrons, does not define the exact path of an electron but predicts the odds of the location of the electron. The probability of finding an electron is greatest where the cloud is densest, and in a less dense area of the cloud the electron is less likely to be found. This model introduced the concept of sub-energy levels.³

After this, in 1932, James Chadwick (1891–1974) discovered the particle called neutron, and the atomic model was further modified. Continued experimentations have yielded many more particles in the atom. The atomic model was further refined by the fact that protons and neutrons are made of even smaller particles, called quarks. Quarks are made of even smaller vibrating energy. The recent finding of the Higgs Boson will modify the model even more.

All these features of the atomic model show that most of the space within an atom is empty. This is astonishing because atoms make up molecules and different molecules combine to form everything that we see, feel, touch, and so on. Matter is solid but, astonishingly, at its heart the atom is empty. An electron is defined as a sub-atomic fundamental particle having mass equal to 1/1837th of a hydrogen atom and carrying one unit of electrical charge. From the postulates of the Bohr model of atom, the mass of a single electron is 9.8×10^{-27} grams. This is equal to the number we obtain by dividing one by 10^{26} . This is obviously a very minute quantity and hence negligible. The mass of proton and neutron, chargeless particle, discovered later in 1932, is $1.672 \times$

10^{-27} grams and 1.675×10^{-24} grams respectively.⁴ Together they constitute the atomic nucleus. It is obvious that the nucleus constitutes 99.99 per cent of the total mass of the atom. But the volume of this dense nucleus is just 0.01 per cent of the total volume of the atom. Moreover, the atom cannot be seen directly by our eyes.

It inevitably follows that 99.99 per cent of the total atomic volume has nothing within! And the atom is regarded as the building block of the material world! The solid-looking universe, including us, is made up of hollow bricks. The atomic model comes close to a core concept of Advaita Vedanta: *jagat mithya*, the unreality of the world.

Advaita's View of the World

‘The Upanishads reveal a systematic search, on the part of the seers, to discover the essential nature, or the First Principle, of the universe. They came to the decision that the essence of things is not given in the object as they present themselves to our senses in space and time. The entire aggregate of experience, external and internal, shows us merely how things appear to us, not how they are in themselves.’⁵ This is the concept of maya, one of the pillars of Advaita Vedanta. Maya denotes ignorance, which obscures the vision of Reality. Maya is the cosmic illusion on account of which the absolute Brahman appears as many—the relative world.

The world of matter appears hard and stable to our senses, and we go about experiencing it. But it is now known that what is visible matter is only 4 per cent of the total reality of the world, and about 96 per cent is what is called dark matter and dark energy. Science has not yet been able to find what this ‘dark energy’ and ‘dark matter’ is. Whatever it may be, visible matter is like a bubble floating on the sea of darkness. This view of the universe has shaken and thrown down the old ideas of realism. Something that is

not present is appearing to our senses as really present. There is empty space inside the atom and empty space outside the atom. This emptiness is giving rise to an illusion of fullness.


Maya has two powers: *avarana*, concealing, and *vikshepa*, projecting. Brahman is concealed and the unreal universe is projected. In other words, maya is the cause and what we see is its effect. But what we see is a mere show or a shadow of the Reality. This is the reason why Advaita Vedanta illustrates this phenomenon with the classic rope-snake illustration. A person sees a snake in the dark and is frightened, but on bringing a lamp he sees that the object of his fear is just a rope and not a snake. Similarly, we see the world as the world, but when ignorance, like darkness, is dispelled by the light of knowledge, we see no more the illusions of the many and realize that it was the one Reality called Brahman.

Acharya Shankara says: 'The world, which is full of attachments, aversions, etc., is like a dream. It appears to be real, as long as it continues, but appears to be unreal when one is awake (when true wisdom dawns).'⁶ Again: 'The *jagat*, world, appears to be *satyam*, true, so long as Brahman, the substratum, the basis of all this creation, is not realized; it is like the illusion of silver in the mother-of-pearl' (7).

Maya is said to be something positive, though intangible, and that cannot be described either as existence or non-existence. It is made up of the three *gunas*—*sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*—and is antagonistic to knowledge. Acharya Shankara affirms that, according to Advaita Vedanta, the Reality is immutable, self-existent, and eternal. Whatever lacks this characteristic of the real cannot be called real. The universe that we experience is, therefore, due to maya, or ignorance, and is not ultimately real.

The hollow atoms make the universe itself hollow. The world, as we see it, is nothing but an

appearance; it has no absolute existence; it is relative. As long as we have the idea of a self, we shall see this world and take it for real. According to Advaita Vedanta, the individual self itself is unreal.

The implications of these quantum theories of matter undoubtedly sound like the conclusions of Advaita Vedanta. We find ourselves at the confluence of the rivers of scientific knowledge and the ocean of Advaita Vedanta philosophy. It will not be long before we discover that the waters in these rivers have their source in the ocean and they are running towards it to finally merge with its reality. 

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Sri Chaitanya in the Sheath of Sri Nityananda

Swami Devarajananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

SRI CHAITANYA INSISTED that bhakti is the most suitable path for most people. In his own words: 'They call you by so many names; they divide you, as it were, by different names, yet in each one of these is to be found your omnipotence. You reach the worshipper through all of these, neither is there any special time so long as the soul has intense love for you. You are so easy of approach; it is my misfortune that I cannot love you.'⁵ Sri Ramakrishna also insisted: 'Pray to God with a longing heart. He will surely listen to your prayer if it is sincere.'⁶ Prayer to God formed the core of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings and, like Sri Chaitanya, he taught that in this age this is the most suitable path for people.

Over the centuries Vrindavan, where Sri Krishna played his divine lila, was forgotten and slowly covered by forests. It would have continued to be that way were it not for Sri Chaitanya, who through his divine insight rediscovered all of Vrindavan's sacred places. By doing this he made Vrindavan the centre of the devotional life of millions of people for centuries to come. Sri Ramakrishna too visited Vrindavan and fell under its divine spell, which guided him in contemplating on the glories and lila of Sri Krishna. He, as it were, authenticated those sacred places once more. Once Sri Ramakrishna 'did not feel so deeply inspired while in Navadwip as when passing by the silted-up shoals in the bed of the Ganga near that place. Asked by Mathur and others the reason of it, the Master said that the old Navadwip containing the

spots of Chaitanya's divine sport had submerged in the river. They had been situated where the shoals now stood. That was why he had deep ecstasy when he passed by them.'⁷

Again, while visiting Vana-Vishnupur Sri Ramakrishna, in an ecstatic mood, experienced a vision of only the face of an ancient image of Goddess Mrinmayi. But much to his bewilderment he found that the face of the goddess installed in the temple looked different. On enquiry he was told that the original image had been vandalized and a new one installed. In order to display his skill, the sculptor had sculpted the face differently. 'The broken head of the old image was carefully kept by a Brahmin in his own house. Shortly after, that devout Brahmin had another image made to bear that head, and installed it in a beautiful spot near the pond, Lalbandh, and began to perform its daily worship and other services' (840). Though he had no idea that they offered the goddess ointment in worship, he got a hint by its telltale smell from one of the lakes. 'Near the lake I went into samadhi, though I had not yet seen the image in the temple. In that state I saw the divine form from the waist up, rising from the water.'⁸ Thus Sri Chaitanya and Sri Ramakrishna visited places that had once been the scenes of God's lila and rediscovered the intrinsic sanctity of those places.

Their method of giving instruction was not very different. Principally it was by example, but they also used parables and touched the

headstrong, in some cases even hit them if necessary. Sri Chaitanya once arrived at the Kazi's durbar with a huge crowd. The Kazi, who had objected to Sri Chaitanya's *sankirtan*, panicked and hid himself. Sri Chaitanya then reassured him by saying that he was only out preaching the name of God and explained the cause behind it. Sri Chaitanya, who had high regards for Advaitacharya, did not mind giving him a beating in order to make a *bhakta* out of him. We can cite a similar incident in Sri Ramakrishna's life. Though he lived in Dakshineswar, courtesy of Rani Rasmani, it did not stop him from slapping her in the temple when her mind strayed. Similarly, while meditating at a ghat on the Ganga Jayanarayan Mukherjee's mind was straying; Sri Ramakrishna, who happened to be near, hit him. Notwithstanding this strange method of teaching, both adopted it when it was called for.



Sri Chaitanya and the muslim Chand Kazi

Higher Similarities

The similarities between Sri Chaitanya and Sri Ramakrishna are very marked in the practice of *madhura bhava*, sweet mood, which is intense, maddening love for God formulated in the language of love between genders. Driven by an intense longing the gopis, especially Sri Radha, felt anguished at being separated from Sri Krishna. But by seeing him again they would experience indescribable joy in his company. The Vaishnavas say that it was to demonstrate Sri Radha's ecstasy on being united with Sri Krishna that Sri Chaitanya was born. Further, it is also believed in Bengal Vaishnavism that Sri Krishna and Sri Radha had assumed the form of Sri Chaitanya. 'Sri Krishna, the supreme Self, the embodiment of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss, is the only Purusha, the Male principle, and all the Jivas and creatures,

both gross and subtle, are Parts of Prakriti, the embodiment of supreme love, and are therefore, His wives. So, if Jivas become pure and holy and whole-heartedly worship Him as their husband, they attain by His grace liberation and unlimited bliss, the goal of their lives. This is the long and short of the Madhura Bhava preached by Chaitanya.' Such attainment, such realization taken to its very limits culminates in Advaita, non-duality.

While depicting the *rasalila*, divine sport through love, the Bhagavata states that as Sri Krishna hides himself from the gopis, who go mad at the separation and search for their Lord. The intense longing that makes them think all the time of Sri Krishna while searching for him melts away all distinctions and the gopis begin regarding themselves as Sri Krishna. All kinds

of sadhanas have as their goal the attainment of this state of non-differentiation with God, the supreme Truth. Broadly speaking, of the five *bhavas*, moods—*shanta*, peaceful, *dasya*, servitor, *sakhyā*, friendship, *vatsalya*, motherly affection, and *madhura*—the first two are considered external and the other three are increasingly intimate means of surrendering oneself to God. Ordinary jivas cannot withstand the physical and emotional intensity while following *madhura bhava*; only the avatars can stand the upheaval. In the case of Sri Chaitanya it was seen that his tendons became loose and blood oozed out of several parts of his body, including the skin. We find Sri Ramakrishna experiencing the same condition during his sadhana. This is called *maha-bhava*, great mood. Sri Radha experienced it and so did Sri Chaitanya and Sri Ramakrishna.

‘It is written in the devotional scriptures that nineteen kinds of emotions manifested in one receptacle are together called the Mahabhava’ (333). *Maha-bhava* can be experienced only by an avatar; ordinary jivas are capable of braving one or two at the most. Sri Ramakrishna’s devotee Atul Ghosh, brother of Girishchandra Ghosh, had a unique vision one winter night at Cossipore. He was watching over Sri Ramakrishna that night. As he was carefully fanning the sleeping Master to keep off the flies and mosquitoes, he began feeling hot. After a while he removed the shawl from his body and put it away in a corner of the room. ‘Meanwhile, behold, what a strange transformation occurred on the Master’s body! One half of his body displayed the form of Krishna and the other half of Radha. The portion of Krishna was bluish pleasing to the eyes and the portion of Radha was bright golden.’¹⁰ Repeatedly rubbing his eyes in disbelief he asked himself if what he was seeing was real. The Master woke up in a while and started talking as usual, and everything became normal again.

On having seen Sri Ramakrishna at the assembly of pandits at Dakshineswar and learning about him from the Brahmani,

Vaishnavacharan remarked with amazement that all the signs of the nineteen kinds of main spiritual moods, the co-existence of which has been called in the devotional scriptures as the ‘Mahabhava’, the great mood, and observed only in the lives of Sri Radha, the embodiment of spiritual moods, and Sri Chaitanya, were seen manifested in the Master. If the indication of the ‘great mood’ ever appeared in the life of a Jiva, thanks to the accumulation of an unprecedented good fortune, at most two or three of those nineteen kinds are seen manifested there. The body of a Jiva could not contain, in the past, the tremendous force of all of them and would, the Sastras say, never be able to do so in future (714).

It was not in any way a remark he made off-handedly. Vaishnavacharan was a great soul endowed with deep spiritual insight. His reverence and devotion for Sri Ramakrishna kept on increasing after their first meeting. He would often take the Master to where he practised sadhana along with the others. Gauri Pandit went further by asserting:

Does Vaishnavacharan call you an incarnation? I should consider his estimate very low. My conviction is that you are He from whose parts incarnations come down to the world from age to age to do good to humanity and with whose power they accomplish that work of theirs. ... I say so on the evidence of the scriptures and from my own experience. If anyone takes up the opposite view and controverts me, I am ready to prove my conviction (730).

Upon Sri Ramakrishna innocently admitting that he could not figure out what they were saying about him, Gauri Pandit replied: ‘Quite right. The scriptures also say, “Thou dost not know Thyself.” So please say how others can

know you. If you have compassion on anybody and let him know the truth, then he can know it' (ibid.). The Gita says: 'Being enveloped by yoga-maya, I do not become manifest to all. This deluded world does not know me who am birthless and undecaying.'¹¹

Sri Chaitanya and Sri Nityananda were one and the same entity, assuming different forms and caring for each other. Sachi Devi told Nitai that while uttering Hari's name Nimai would fall to the ground. Thenceforth Nitai would always remain close to Nimai and hold him during ecstasy so that he would not fall and get hurt. Jagai and Madhai were an infamous duo around that time; Nimai and Nitai redeemed them through love. While speaking about the Master, Girishchandra Ghosh said: 'How can I express his love? When you see me, you will get faith and understand what the Master was. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu delivered Jagai and Madhai. They were two villains, but compared to me they were nothing! The Master gave shelter to a horrible sinner like me. If I had known that there was such a large dustbin to dump all my sins in, I would have enjoyed more pleasures in my life. Look at me, I am Ramakrishna's miracle!'¹² Sri Ramakrishna would come to meet Yogin Ma at her house and she too often went to Dakshineswar to see him. Manmatha, a stroppey ruffian who could fight single-handedly against many opponents, was hired by Yogin Ma's brother to frighten Sri Ramakrishna. 'After Manmatha saw the Master and heard a few words from him, he fell at his feet and said to him, weeping: "My Lord, I am guilty. Please forgive me."¹³ Manmatha then became transformed by Sri Ramakrishna. Kalipada Ghosh 'was one of those wayward souls who were saved by the Master. Like Girish, he was an out-and-out bohemian, a debauchee, and a drunkard' (317).

After being initiated into sannyasa Sri Chaitanya lived an austere life in a small hut eating frugally. This was to set an example of how sannyasins should live. He requested Sri Nityananda to see that those who were householders lived by upholding moral values. And for that Sri Chaitanya insisted that Sri Nityananda marry and live like them. This proposal was distressing and hard to accept, but finally Sri Nityananda relented and obeyed Sri Chaitanya. He never wore the sannyasin's robes, for the Avadhutas do not do so. Sri Ramakrishna had once wished to meet Ishvarchandra Vidyasagar. Master Mahashaya informed Vidyasagar about it accordingly, adding that Sri Ramakrishna was a *paramahansa*. Vidyasagar wanted to know what type of *paramahansa* Sri Ramakrishna was and whether he wore ochre robes. Master Mahashaya put it nicely: 'No, sir. He is an unusual person. He wears a red-bordered cloth and polished slippers. He lives in a room in Rani Rasmani's temple garden. In his room there is a couch with a mattress and mosquito net. He has no outer indication of holiness.'¹⁴ The description did not tally with the general idea of a *paramahansa* or a sannyasin. Vidyasagar agreed to meet him and so Sri Ramakrishna called on him at his house.

Another humorous but significant incident occurred in Dakshineswar when a learned but poor brahmana who had heard of a *paramahansa* wanted to see him. When he entered the room, he found devotees sitting around and a person dressed ordinarily sitting on the bed, complete with clean bed sheets, mattress and mosquito curtain! No *gerua*, matted hair, ashes, tiger-skin, and neither sitting under a tree! Nothing to tell him from an ordinary person! And to think of all the trouble he took to come here. Feeling much vexed at what he saw, the brahmana began castigating Sri Ramakrishna before everyone for going against the norm

and telling him how the scriptures describe a *paramahansa*. The Master, not lacking a sense of humour, kept smiling as the brahmana kept noticing all the articles of daily use, including a pair of hookahs. The more the brahmana noticed the ‘discrepancies’, the more angry he became. When it was evening Sri Ramakrishna asked the brahmana to stay for the night. He agreed and left for his daily evening prayers on the bank of the Ganga. As he meditated, to his dismay, the image of Sri Ramakrishna kept coming again and again to his mind instead of his chosen deity. The brahmana tried to concentrate again but failed. He finally rose and made a dash for the Master’s room. Seeing him running towards the room the devotees felt apprehensive wondering what kind of mess the brahmana was now going to make. As they hurried after the brahmana, they were amazed to find him before Sri Ramakrishna, tears of joy were running down his chest, and the Master’s foot on his head. Later, holding both the Master’s feet, he begged forgiveness for being rude.

The brahmana realized that Sri Ramakrishna was none other than his chosen deity on whom he had been trying to concentrate.¹⁵ This points out how Sri Nityananda appeared outwardly.

The ‘flattened rice’ festival of Panihati was initiated by Sri Nityananda aided by Das Raghnath. Sri Ramakrishna came to attend the festival, the typical feature of which was the singing of Hari’s name. When the singers’ eyes fell on him they broke out:

Who takes the name of Hari on
the bank of Ganga, the river divine?
It seems Nitai, the bestower of the divine love,
has come.
Who takes the name of Hari,
And sings victory to Radha?
It seems Nitai, the bestower of divine love,
has come.
Our Nitai, the giver of love, has come.
How can our hearts be soothed without him?
Here comes our Nitai, the bestower of love.¹⁶

As they sang the last line ‘they pointed their fingers at the Master and danced with great delight’ (ibid.). Indeed, they

imagined Nitai and Nimai had descended among them once more to play their divine sport. Sri Ramakrishna would often be seen immersed into the mood of Nimai. He used to rue that Nimai would go visiting houses preaching the name of Hari, but such was the state of his health that he could not walk for long; he needed a carriage or a palanquin for going to places. Sri Ramakrishna said: ‘Chaitanya and Nityananda scattered the name of Hari to everyone,

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu listening Gadadhar Pandit’s Bhagavatam discourse



including the pariah, and embraced them all. A brahmin without this love is no longer a brahmin. And a pariah with the love of God is no longer a pariah. Through bhakti an untouchable becomes pure and elevated.’¹⁷ We know, of course, that Sri Ramakrishna had the same feeling of oneness with Nimai when he went into samadhi upon ‘the seat of Sri Chaitanya’ at the Hari-sabha of Kolutola, Calcutta. Those present there commented that Sri Chaitanya himself had reappeared on the seat. Bhagavan Das Babaji was terribly outraged at this incident, but later, when the Master met him at Kalna, the saint came to realize how worthy a personage the Master was and sincerely begged pardon for his angry outburst. He had no doubt in his mind that Sri Chaitanya had again come as the Master for their protection.

Sri Ramakrishna’s outward appearance belied his inner state. In him the external Nitai and the internal Nimai dovetailed with each other. A rind protects the kernel inside, but if there is no kernel within, the rind fails to serve its purpose. Sri Ramakrishna was the combination and sum total of the two. ‘So the Master announced in a loud voice, that one who came as Krishna and

again as Rama, has now appeared in the world as Ramakrishna to liberate living beings. This incarnation is the total advent of God: Advaita, Chaitanya and Nityananda all three are in one.’¹⁸ And that is what prompted Bhairavi Brahmani to assert: ‘Chaitanya is manifesting this time in the “sheath” of Nityananda.’



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Eternal Words

Swami Adbhutananda

Compiled by Swami Siddhananda; translated by Swami Sarvadevananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

KALI MAHARAJ [Swami Abhedananda] went to the West at the command of Swamiji. When Swamiji asked him to give lectures, Kali became nervous and said: 'I cannot; how can I speak?' Swamiji said: 'The face I looked at [Sri Ramakrishna's] before I spoke, you also see that face and speak.' After that, there was no more fear. He spoke very well.

Satyabhama had a desire to become queen. Rukmini became jealous. Sri Krishna came to know that. One day he was sitting with Satyabhama when he saw Hanuman coming. He told Satyabhama: 'You quickly take the form of Sita and let me take the form of Rama. Hanuman will not see any other form.' Satyabhama could not take the form of Sita. At that moment Rukmini, who is Lakshmi herself, came and took the form of Sita. Hanuman did not like to see any other form but that of Rama. He used to say: 'Though the Lord of Sri [Lakshmi], and the Lord of Janaki [Sita] are one and the same Paramatman, yet the lotus-eyed Rama is my everything.'

One should not give up the instructions of the guru. Let people say whatever they like, never allow room for any doubt. Unless you see it with your own eyes, it is not proper to believe any statement concerning another. It is moreover a mistake to doubt anyone. All of the sadhus and great souls have said: 'If one follows the guru's instruction with one-pointed devotion, it will do them good. If one develops *nishtha*, steadfast devotion, towards one's guru, then the *nishtha* for the Ishta, Chosen Ideal, develops.

For he who has no *nishtha* towards his guru, there is no hope of ever developing *nishtha* towards his Ishta. There is no hope for any good coming to him. In this world the guru is the only one whom one can trust in. The guru's words are the basic foundation. His feet are the only refuge.' One can worship one's guru's photograph. That will surely bring welfare.

Adversities arise if one does not worship at the exact time. It is better not to worship at all than to perform it at odd times. I have a strong desire to do worship, but on account of my health, I cannot do it. You should remember that God has not taken even a drop of water until now. My dear, can worship be performed at this late hour of the morning? You offer food, only then will he eat. Just as you feel hungry, he also feels the same. He is palpably present. I have seen him partake of the food. If you cause him to suffer, you too must suffer.

Even God is not satisfied if one does not call upon him under the proper circumstances. See how dearly Sri Krishna loved Draupadi as a friend. Yet at the time of her calamity, when she was about to be disrobed, she called out to him in this way: 'Oh God of the distressed! Friend of the lowly! Remover of danger! Protector of modesty!' But, he didn't come. The moment Draupadi called upon him as 'the Lord of the Pandavas, the friend of the Pandavas' did he appear. He did not come until Draupadi called him by the name of the Pandavas then present. As soon as the Pandava name was uttered, he immediately appeared.

Lust and Greed

Control lust. Don't permit it to increase. Always pay attention so that lust does not crop up. It is an enemy that places obstacles on the path of one's sadhana. He who has conquered lust has reached the goal.

See what base understanding! People spend their lives in all sorts of worldly garbage, yet will not control their senses even a bit to move towards God. People stay day and night in filth and excrement with a brood of children. Exercising a little control, they should call upon God. Still they will not do so. If one moves towards God, one attains happiness and peace in this life and the next. But having such filthy minds, they will by no means move towards God. This is truly maya's delusion. However, there are women who are like goddesses, who have divine disposition. They are truly the ideal for all women. Nowadays, such women are very rare.

One should try to spend the few days of one's life with an honest bent of mind, striving to live in peace, without fighting and quarrelling with others. For a small piece of land and a few coins you are beating your brothers with sticks and filing lawsuits. My dear, you do not consider how few days you have been in this world or how few days you have yet to live. Honest people ask themselves: 'How many more days may I live? Why do I add to my anxiety fighting over such petty things? When I came into this world, I brought nothing with me. When I leave, even then, I cannot take anything. Why do I unnecessarily invite strife? Why do I suffer?' Therefore, the wise do not cavil over a patch of land or a few coins. They consider peace to be superior to these.

Once liquor enters a person's home, there is absolutely no doubt that his family will quickly come to ruin. Health and wealth will surely be lost. On one side, they cannot even fill their

stomachs nor clothe their children; yet, after earning a few coins by much labour, they squander it away in drinking. See what fools! By drinking liquor they get intoxicated. They endure so much suffering, yet cannot give it up. See their foolishness! Moreover, unchaste women cast their maya on these fools, driving them away by snatching everything they have. Still these people return to such women and become lost in their sweet words. They fail to see how hollow such words are. See what maya! My dear, they are the very embodiment of maya. Do not become mesmerized by their words.

'Oh Bhagavan! Please protect me from your maya.' Throw out your childish thoughts; they have immense power to enthrall. Once captivated, you will never be able to give it up. You will die. The prostitutes keep you beguiled by casting their net of maya in such a way that it is difficult even to understand they have enchanted you. So take care to keep a safe distance from them.

To the extent that you increase your enjoyments, to that extent enjoyments will increase. And to the extent you decrease them, to that extent they will also decrease. Moreover, to the degree by which you indulge yourself, your restlessness will increase in equal measure. Attachment to pleasure-seeking can thus never give one peace or happiness. As much as the mind is withdrawn from sense enjoyment, that much joy will it derive. Apart from this, there is no other means of attaining peace.

The engineer has died. It is a matter of great sorrow. I have already told you that there is no certainty of this body—when it shall stay, and when it shall go. That is why I suggested he save some money. He has left some young children, an aged mother, and a daughter of marriageable age. You said they have some money and with that, somehow, everything will be managed.

Anyway, let his son-in-law 'Bhu' look after them. Write to him on my behalf. That engineer was an honest man. He could renounce the attachment for underhanded earnings. Is he an ordinary man who can resist the desire to accept such money? What are people not doing for money? Whatever else may be the case, an honest man will not suffer any time. This is for certain.

You are the son of a rich man, a very wealthy man. There is no dearth of money. Be careful! Let not wine and women enter your heart or else there will be total destruction. If you can spend your life in an honest manner, through you the welfare of many poor and afflicted people will become possible. You can do many noble deeds, but if you entertain perverse inclinations, there will be no escape for you. Not only will it be impossible for you to help others, rather, it will do harm. Therefore I say: rich man, take heed!

The Master asked a gentleman: 'What is your wish?' He said: 'Let me have a child.' Then the Master said: 'You rascal! I fed you so much with sandesh and *rasagolla* but all of it went to waste.' See the play of maya. His consciousness did not awaken even after listening to so much spiritual talk.

Parents should give freedom to their son regarding the issue of marriage. 'You see this sam-sara; these are our earnings. If you wish, you can marry.' In this way, they should explain every detail of family life to their son. It is not proper to offer your son in marriage unless he is earning his living. Earning twenty to twenty-five rupees cannot be considered sufficient. Such a sum cannot fill even his own stomach; how can he feed others? When his situation is such that he can easily feed three or four, then it is proper to offer him in marriage. If the parents have an enormous inheritance, they can offer him in marriage as there is no lack of food and clothing. Where there is a scarcity, out of greed for a few

thousand rupees, it is not proper to offer one's son in marriage. Families with financial troubles can explain the situation very clearly to their eligible son. Even after that, if the son marries, it is a great relief for the parents, because the son cannot blame them. See, on one side, they have no certainty of even two square meals per day, but out of their greed for money, they purchase more misery by giving their son in marriage. They think that by getting that [dowry] money, some financial difficulties may be removed. But it only makes matters worse. On top of that, they bear children every year, which increases their financial woes. Such suffering arises from faulty thinking. Daily they see thousands of such incidents, yet they cannot realize this and by repeating the same mistakes, they suffer miserably.

Mahaprabhu Sri Chaitanyadeva used to say: 'Listen, oh brother Nityananda, listen. There is no hope for worldly people.' Each word of this is true. The Master would also say: 'You must take great caution when you mix and speak with worldly people.' They don't know how to speak straightforward guileless words. Day and night they are steeped in crookedness and deceit; can they give up that nature by wishful thinking? They should at least speak only after giving appropriate consideration to time and place. They cannot do even that. How could they? They are unable to discern. But are all householders like that? No. There are honest householders. One can acquire merit just by seeing them.

It is not enough that a baby is born; its survival is the critical thing. Your salary is fixed. If you bear children every year, how shall you feed them? The Master used to say: 'Live like brother and sister after the birth of one or two children.' When there are fewer children, they can fill their stomachs and wear suitable clothes. That is impossible with numerous children. People who bear many children, yet earn a paltry sum, die of

anxiety while their children die from starvation and neglect. This is the result of uncontrolled sense enjoyment! Such parents are constantly worried thinking: 'How shall I feed them? How shall I give my daughters' hand in marriage?' On the other hand, they do not pay the least attention to sense control. People who become so indulgent can only expect suffering. If one wants to save oneself from such suffering, one may exercise control. That way, constant needs will no longer plague one. After enjoying food and clothing one can leave this world joyfully. What purpose does it serve to have children who lack sufficient food and clothing, get no education, and do not grow into persons of character? The essential thing is to raise the children up to the status of true human beings.

It is very bad to go to the theatre every day. Being attached to that, many go astray. By dancing, all the prostitute women cast their maya upon the young boys and totally ruin them. You are now in your youth. This is a time when you are vulnerable. One who can remain steady will be saved. I am not saying there is nothing good in the theatre. There are many good things too from which to learn. But how many people have the power to select the good over the bad? So many objects of temptation are there in front of them, and the mind is a rascal. No matter how much you educate it, it will run only in that direction. How many have the power to stop that? So it is best to stay away from the objects of temptation. I consider you to be my own. That is why I say these things to you. Will I say such things to just anyone on the street?

I can understand very well that you are poor. But what can I do about that? You say that you have three or four children, you are in a financial crisis, and cannot maintain your family. So what can I do about that? I am a monk. Have you come to me to learn the alchemy of

making gold? Oh my dear, I do not know all these things. Rather than approaching a holy man to listen to holy instructions and learn the means of escaping the clutches of delusive maya, he instead comes to learn the alchemy of making gold. See the folly! He is steeped in maya; what else can he do? If God does not shower his grace, what power does one possess to escape from maya's hands?

Just as money brings benefit, it can in the same way bring harm. Lust and greed are the cause of all ruin. One can carry on without a spouse, but it is very difficult to carry on without money. With the help of money many noble deeds can be done. One can, for example, help the poor, the afflicted, and the orphans. Many such noble deeds can be done. However, there is no respite if mischievous thoughts enter one's mind. By the influence of money one can do different kinds of mischief and other types of torture. For the most part, persons having money rarely cultivate noble thoughts. Such is the glamour of that rascal money that it will have to drag one down into mischief. It even ruins a good man! One having both money and a pious character is surely the benefactor of God's great compassion. Now you understand the matter: the same money can have two different impacts. Without his grace there is no escape from its negative influence.

After marriage a man becomes totally submissive to his wife. He keeps himself busy in attempts to please her. Father, mother, brother, friend, all become strangers. He alienates himself from all. See the play of maya! The mother who gave birth to him becomes a stranger. Again, see how big executives earning two to five thousand rupees a month, or generals commanding ten to fifteen thousand soldiers during war, fall utterly under their wives' control. Whatever she says, he remains silent. It is as if all his knowledge and intelligence are eclipsed

the moment he comes near her! See what a power to charm! But is it so with everyone? There are self-controlled people who never fall into such delusion. Their wives cannot dominate them. Just because one loves one's wife, must one become enslaved to her? It is one thing to love; it is another thing to become a slave. They become enslaved in equal measure of their sensual indulgence.

Dharma-Karma

The five Pandavas were the embodiment of dharma. Yudhishtira was highly dharmic. He did not forsake dharma even during the time of his utmost pain and suffering. Dharma alone can give true and lasting joy in life. You will surely suffer if you abandon it. So never forsake dharma.

Now the price of everything has become inflated. Will people run around crying, 'Where is food? Where is food?', or will they follow their dharma? Now, the very thought of food has become predominant. In earlier days there was no such concern; everyone could hold their minds more or less on their sadhana. That is why Swamiji used to say: 'First eat your fill, then practise religion and perform right actions.' If their stomachs are empty, how will they practise dharma? First make arrangements to collect some food. Eat your fill, then feed and nurture ten others. By that means you will practise dharma and right conduct.

Everyone respects karma. When one's karma becomes known, people will automatically show respect. God undoubtedly resides in all. His manifestation is evident. But one must respect one in whom his manifestation is greater. God shines through their works. Karma is superior. That is why Bhagavan said to Arjuna: 'Oh Arjuna, perform karma.' By karma alone can you sever the bonds of karma.

Whatever type of karma one performs, one's mind will become exactly like that. The mind of one who performs base work becomes debased. The mind of one who performs noble and holy work becomes broad, elevated, and pure. The type of work one does causes one's mind to move into that realm; one contemplates on that idea. Sweepers clean toilets; their minds certainly go there. Similarly, whatever work one does, one's mind will surely follow. [Work done for God makes the mind go towards God; it is the *attitude* that matters, not the external form of the work].

How can a person perform dharma? One is pained to give money even to the mother by whose grace one sees this world. The mother raised the child from its early days with much suffering; yet now, earning a good amount of money, he spends large sums on his wife and children not even looking at the mother who has given him birth. Is it a matter of ordinary suffering! This is truly what is known as the Kali Yuga. Where the mother suffers like this, that family will have no peace; it is most unholy and will quickly come to ruin.

How can you understand what intense suffering the widows bear? Ishvarchandra Vidyasagar understood this. There is no help in this world or the next for one who deprives a widow of her property. Everyone should help the helpless widows. If tears fall from their eyes, the one who caused such pain cannot escape his own ruin.

Your stepmother has passed away. After all, she is your mother! You should observe the *ashouch* [post-death rituals]. You can of course perform worship. After her *shraddha* ceremony [funeral obsequies] is over make a food offering to the Til-bhandeshwar Shiva temple at Benaras and feed the sadhus. That will benefit her soul. This is really the duty and dharma of a son.

(To be continued)

Svarajya Siddhih: Attaining Self-dominion

Gangadharendra Saraswati

Translated from Sanskrit and annotated by Swami Narasimhananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

WE NOW LOOK at Udayanacharya's stand regarding Ishvara being the cause of the universe, as shown in his Nyaya treatise *Nyayakusumanjali*. The objection against this stand of the Nyaya philosophy is that if Ishvara were to be held as the creator of the universe, then Ishvara becomes corporeal. Also, since Ishvara lacks physical instruments like the body, it cannot create the universe. Udayanacharya refutes both these arguments on the basis of the fallacy of the non-existence of the subject. Since the opponent of the Nyaya school does not believe in Ishvara, it cannot be presented as the subject in both the arguments. Udayana also posits the fallacy of contradiction. The school opposing the Nyaya thought does not hold that Ishvara is corporeal. However, if Ishvara is made the subject of the Nyaya opponents' arguments, they cannot hold that there is no agency in Ishvara because that would mean a self-contradiction. This view is further explained by a philosopher:

When the theist seeks to prove the existence of God, he does so with the aim in view that God is the creator. So in any attempt to prove the non-existence of God with the help of any inference where God is posited as the subject, the opponent will commit the fallacy of deviation from accepted tenet (*siddhānta-vyāghāta*).

In order to obviate the discrepancy set forth above, the opponent may aver that God is not

the subject of the inference. It is the earth, the sprout, etc. that stand as the subject. Then the process of reasoning stands as follows: The earth, the sprout and the like are produced by some corporeal author, since they are effects. In this counter-argument the opponent draws a universal concomitance between effect-as-such (*kāryatva*) and precedence of corporeal authorship. But Udayana here points out that if any such universal relation could be established, there would have been no bar to the acceptance of the cogency of the opponent's argument. But the fact is that these two are in no way related through concomitance in presence and absence. The earth would here serve as the contrary instance (*vipakṣa*), which is after all, a product, as the opponent also admits, but it is not preceded by some corporeal author. Hence, the inference involves discrepancy (*vyabhicāra*).

The opponent may, however, endeavour to prove that the earth and other grand phenomena of nature are not products at all, for the simple reason that they do not stand in need of any corporeal agent. But such a position would stand contradicted by perceptual knowledge.

It may be further contended that the earth, the sprout, etc. are not produced by any agent since they are not produced by a body. But Udayana retorts that the reason here employed suffers from the defect of superficial attribution. 'Not being produced' would be sufficient to prove that the earth and the like are not produced by any agent. Thus, the adjunct in the reason is superfluous, involving the fallacy of

futile adjunct (*vyāpyatvāsiddhi*). If, however, the opponent agrees to do away with the adjunct in the reason, then also there is no escape from the fallacy of *svārūpāsiddhi*, as the reason of the inference would then stand as 'not being produced' (*ajanyatva*), which does not necessarily subsist in the subject. None is prepared to admit that the earth, the sprout, etc. are not produced at all.

It is worthy of notice that Udayana, after weighing the counter-inferences advanced by the opponent, proceeds to enquire about the purpose in view with which the opponent employs these counter-inferences. They may be advanced either for the purpose of contradicting the inference of the Naiyāyika or for citing a rival inference with a view to counterbalance it. But both these attempts would certainly fail for the simple reason that the counter-inference of the antitheist suffers from the absence of *pakṣadharmatā* (subsistence of the probans in the subject), through the knowledge of which the validity of inference is invariably determined.⁹⁹

Objection: The unattached, independent, Ishvara of the form of consciousness may be incapable of creating *pradhāna*. However, it is quite logical to hold that having eternal knowledge, desire, and activity, and also being interconnected with all that is manifested, Ishvara creates the universe out of atoms.

Reply: This objection of the Nyaya-Vaisheshika schools is being analyzed and set aside in the following two verses.

सर्वज्ञः सर्वलिप्सुः सकलकृतियुतो नित्यमीशो यदि-
स्यात्सर्वकार्यं सदास्यादुदयभृतिलया यौगपद्येन च स्युः ।
बाह्योपादानवत्स्यात्तनुकरणधियां विश्वसर्गे व्यपेक्षा
निस्तर्कं चानुमानं कृतिरपिहियतश्चेष्टयाऽर्थं विधत्ते
॥ २० ॥

If Ishvara is always omniscient, all-desiring, and active, then all actions would take place all the time. Creation, preservation, and dissolution

would happen simultaneously. (If Ishvara needs atoms as the causal material for the creation of the universe, then) like the external cause (needed by a potter for making a pot) body, sense-organs, and intellect will be needed for the creation of the universe. Presumption will also be unable to quash all the objections (arising in such a case) because indeed effort brings effect only through the body.

If Ishvara is thus held to be eternal, omniscient, having all desires, and performing actions suitable for the creation or birth of everything, then it would be tantamount to saying that all actions take place all the time. For instance, plants and trees flower and bear fruits according to specific seasons. But if the above reasoning were to be adopted, it would mean that there would be no definite seasonal pattern to the flowering and bearing fruits of trees and plants, as they would flower and bear fruits all the time.

Objection: What if it be held that associated effects come together at the same time?

Reply: That cannot be held so because then the cause and the effect cannot be pinpointed, and it would mean that the cause and the effect would come into existence together at all times. It would be impossible to ascertain when the cause or the effect came into being. Further, it would lead to the fallacy of infinite regress. Also, if everything were to happen at the desire of Ishvara alone, then all the cycles of creation, preservation, and dissolution would take place simultaneously all the time. There would be no time interval between the creation, existence, and dissolution of anything, and this again would lead to an illogical and impossible situation. Also, it would become impossible to understand any entity because everything would be simultaneously created and destroyed, and thus nothing would exist at any given point of time. That would also mean that practically

there would be no creation. No knowledge of an entity would be possible in such a scenario. If it is held that Ishvara is the only entity that desires and creates things, then imaginary and impossible entities like 'flower in the sky' would also become possible to posit. There would arise many other fallacies like life and death together all the time.

If it is held that Ishvara creates the universe from atoms, then again there would be the fallacy of infinite regress, because it would be difficult to prove the origin of atoms. Also, just like a potter who makes pots using a potter's wheel and other instruments, Ishvara also would have to use external instruments like the body, sense organs, and the intellect. In that case Ishvara would be just a part of creation and would not be the cause of creation itself.

Having quashed the stand that Ishvara is the cause of the universe, now the stand that atoms are the cause of the universe is being set aside.

कस्मादण्वोः क्रियास्यात्कथमथ मिलितौ निष्पत्तीको कथं वा कार्यं ताभ्यां तृतीयं किमिति च न महत्पारिमाण्डल्यतः स्यात् । तेभ्यः कस्मान्महान्स्यात्किमिति पुनरसावेव नित्यो न ते स्यान्निवृत्त्यश्चाणुः कथं वा निरवयव इति ब्रूह्यसत्कार्यवादिन्

॥ २१ ॥

O Asatkaryavadins, please tell! What causes action between two atoms? (When the coming together of atoms in the beginning of creation is not upheld) how can these two indivisible atoms come together? How can the effect (in the form of a dyad) be different from (these two atoms)? Why is not a dyad of greater dimension like a triad? How can a triad produced out of dyads be of greater dimension than the dyads? (According to your school of thought) why is the triad not eternal? Also, how is the atom indivisible and eternal?

To understand Asatkaryavada we need to understand what Satkaryavada is. The Sankhya school

follows the causation theory of Satkaryavada. This theory holds that nothing that did not exist previously can be produced. Production of a thing means that that thing is manifested due to some changes or modifications. These changes take place in the causes that effectively had the effects already in them, albeit in a potential form. Therefore, when an effect is produced from a cause, what happens is that the effect, which was already present in the cause, is manifested due to the arising of favourable conditions. Consequently, nothing is created, but there is only the manifestation of a thing. This is the theory of Satkaryavada. The *kārya*, effect, was *sat*, existing already in the cause. The oil always exists in the oilseed, the statue exists in the stone, and the curd always exists in the milk.

This theory just in contrast to Satkaryavada is called A-satkaryavada. It is briefly explained by a scholar:

Every change was thus absolutely a new one, and when it was past, the next moment the change was lost absolutely. There were only the passing dharmas or manifestations of forms and qualities, but there was no permanent underlying dharma or substance. Sāṃkhya also holds in the continual change of dharmas, but it also holds that these dharmas represent only the conditions of the permanent reals. The conditions and collocations of the reals change constantly, but the reals themselves are unchangeable. ... This doctrine is therefore contrasted to Sāṃkhya doctrine as *asatkāryavāda*.¹⁰⁰

(To be continued)

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REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



Samskrta and Saṅgita

Dr S S Janaki

The Kuppuswami Sastri Research Institute, Chennai 600 004. Web-site: www.ksrisanskrit.in. 2010. viii + 338 pp. ₹ 400.

Containing twelve good articles this book presents valuable information on *samskrta*, Sanskrit, and *saṅgita*, music. The first three articles trace the connection between Sanskrit and music from the Vedic period to the present time. Music is a combination of sound and syllable; it is broadly of two kinds: vocal and instrumental. Indian music covers an immensely long period and has undergone many changes due to political, sociological, and other factors. The entire history of music is divided into six phases: *sāma* music, *gāndharva* system, synthesized common old Indian music, Hindustani, Carnatic, and the modern development of both these systems on different lines.

The first article deals with the 'Role of Sanskrit in the Development of Indian Music'. The earliest music was the chants of the Sama Veda, which is more than 4000 years old. This chanting became the basis of Indian music. Vocal and instrumental music also formed part of the Vedic sacrifices. The vina, lute, is of great antiquity and is praised in Vedic literature. The *Aitareya Aranyaka* (3.2.5), in the context of some higher *upasanas*, meditations, compares the human body to a lute during worship. Several types of vinas such as *vāṇa*, *karkari*, and *kāṇḍa* are mentioned in the Vedas. Other instruments like *nādī*, *tunava*, *āghātī*, *ādambara*, and *dundubhi* were also used with dances during Vedic times. Songs derived from the Sama Veda are named Gandharva Veda. A few extant manuscripts are also named Gandharva Tantra. Throughout the ages Sanskrit has been a powerful medium for expressing devotion.

In the second article, 'Samskrta and Saṅgita', the author shows how Sanskrit, which is an ideal medium of expressing ideas, became increasingly refined by grammatical corrections. Panini and Patanjali, the great grammarians, emphasized the proper pronunciation of vowels and consonants. The author says that the singer or reciter of verses had to cultivate his chief instrument, the voice, which is used for expression and flexibility. Music is classified into two types: fixed and free. The former is endowed with proper beat, rhythm, sentiment, as well as syllables. Beauty is inherent in the sound pattern of Sanskrit, which arises from the *laghu-guru*, short-long, pattern of the component syllables.

In the third article, 'Saṅgita in the Vedic period', the author says that Vedic people were keenly involved in the fine arts such as music, dance, and drama. This evidence is scattered throughout the Vedic Samhitas, Brahmanas, and Aranyakas. Music was an integral part of sacrificial rituals and also of different festive occasions like *samana*. According to the *Shatapatha Brahmana*, women were the original Sama Veda chanters.

The fourth article is 'Śrī Muttusvāmī Dikṣitar and His Kṛtis'. In Carnatic music *kṛti* is compositional form. The second half of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries were the golden age of Carnatic music. Muttusvami's classical songs are beautifully worded, phrased, and held with a perfect diction. He scaled new heights in music and *sahitya* and their many dimensional theories.

The fifth article is 'Muttusvāmī Dikṣitar and Tiruvarur'. This paper refers to the *Shankara Samhita*, a Purana that praises Tiruvarur as an important place for attaining moksha, liberation. Muttusvami was an expert in esoteric lore and his *kṛtis* are a mine of information regarding the different divine forms and temples scattered over India.

The sixth paper is 'Gaṇapatikirtanas of Muttusvāmi Dikṣitar'. A luminary in the firmament of Sanskrit and music, Muttusvami composed twenty-five songs and an important treatise on the various forms of Ganesha in Tiruvārur. Various forms of Ganesha as well as hymns to the god are mentioned. Moreover, the personality, charms, dress, decoration, qualities, and colour of various Ganeshas are also delineated.

In the seventh paper, 'Two Gaṇapatis in Muttusvāmi Dikṣitar's Songs', Gaṇapati is glorified. The author has given the English rendering of Muttusvami's songs on Maha and Uchchhishtha Gaṇapati, along with critical comments on particular words, Puranic allusions, iconographical details, and esoteric concepts. This paper highlights the value of Muttusvami's contribution to the theoretical and practical aspects of the *upāsana* on Gaṇapati.

In the eighth article, 'Śrī Viśvanāttam Bhaje'ham-Caturdaśa Rāgamālikā—A Study', Dr Janaki has given different parts of Muttusvami's song with its fourteen different ragas! The author also discusses the contribution of Muttusvami's ancestors to Carnatic songs and music. The article has such depth that one is amazed at the author's vast scriptural and non-scriptural learning.

The ninth article is 'Navagraha Kīrtanas of Śrī Muttusvāmi Dikṣitar'. Here Dr Janaki deals with the worship of the *navagrahas*, nine planets. A diagram gives the various divisions and the symbols associated with each level. She renders the hymn into English and discusses it from different angles. Astrological charts and their remarkable sacred meanings are also included.

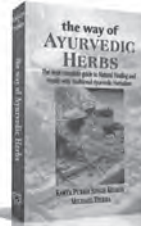
The tenth paper is 'Indian Classical Dance and Temple Tradition'. The scriptures are considered authoritative sources not only of religion and ethics but also of the cultural way of life. Etymologically, the term *abhinaya* means that which brings an object near. Bharata's *Nāṭya Śāstra* (8.7–8) takes *abhinaya* to mean all elements that bring out the full emotional and contextual import of the representation. It refers to the four categories of the spoken word, bodily gestures, make-up, and emotional involvement. Photographs related to dance, drama, Shiva puja, and mudras are included in this section.

The next article is 'Citations in the *Bṛhaddeśi*'. The *Bṛhaddeśi* is an ancient manuscript with musical contents, unique in the history of music. Dr Janaki presents here the text and general methodology of music. The first section of the manuscript is missing and from this available text Dr Janaki shows that the author of the manuscript was Matanga.

The last article is the remarkable 'Contribution of Tamil Nadu to Sanskrit—Alaṅkāra, Saṅgīta and Nāṭya Śāstras'. In this paper Dandin, of the ancient Kanchipuram of the seventh century, is referred to as a pioneer. Nearly twenty-five ancient and modern writers have commented on his *Kavyadarsha*. Dr Janaki informs us that large chunks of this work have been incorporated in the Sinhalese work *Siya-bas-lakara*, or *Sviyabhasalankara*, of King Silameghasena (c.830–51). A Tibetan version of the work with Mongolian commentaries is also known. This section is replete with deep historical findings and insights, showing Dr Janaki's profound scholarship. A general index enhances the book, which is a great contribution to the scholarly world of Indian music.

Prof. Suchitra Ray Acharyya

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The Way of Ayurvedic Herbs

Karta Purkh Singh Khalsa
and Michael Tierra

Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 41 U A
Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi
110 007, 2010. xxi + 365 pp. ₹ 295.

We all fall ill sometimes and look out for fast cures. Allopathy grants us relief, though most of the time it also produces some side effects. Medicines are given to cure the ills and also the effects of medicines. Gradually, our bodies get dependent on medicines, which are but a collection of chemicals. This is a sad state of affairs, for people become victims of various medical drug-induced ailments. The production of medicines has a bad effect on the flora and fauna as well. Recently, there has been a depletion in the number of vultures due to eating of animal carcasses containing the drug paracetamol. The worst part is that all this is happening while nature has given us a

bounty of medicines in trees and plants all around us. Only we do not recognize them. India is home to one of the most ancient and advanced systems of medicine, called Ayurveda, the science of life. Even complicated surgeries were perfected in this system. Unfortunately, thanks to the neglect of Sanskrit education, this knowledge lies hidden in ancient texts. With its true practitioners dwindling in numbers, Ayurveda is far from regaining its true position as a mainstream system of cure.

Rising medical costs and increasing awareness about the ill-effects of Allopathic medicines has led to more and more patients seeking alternative systems, Ayurveda being one such. However, what these patients find mostly is some luxury retreats offering pseudo-Ayurveda rather than the proper system of treatment. This has reinforced the belief that Ayurveda is not a complete system of medicine but something bordering on the cure by quacks. Old Ayurvedic treatises should be made accessible both to the medical fraternity and common readers to help them have a glimpse of the vastness and depth of this system. The present book does exactly this.

While the name of the book underlines the importance of herbs in Ayurveda, the basic principles of this science are given clearly and briefly. Ayurveda is based on the concept of five basic elements: space, air, fire, water, and earth. The interactions of these elements with human beings and their surroundings are the basic premise of this system. Each person is unique in Ayurveda and there is no generic cure. The three *doshas*, imbalances, called *vata*, *pitta*, and *kapha* need to be in proper proportion, else diseases cause havoc. These concepts are explained lucidly. Ayurvedic anatomy; the seven types of *dhatu*s, tissues; the thirteen *agni*s, fires; and the three *malas*, toxins, are outlined. The diagnosis in Ayurveda is highly personalized and starts from determining the type of the body the patient has. This is followed by an external and internal examination, along with an eightfold and a tenfold examination. Detailed questionnaires for these examinations have been provided, and the main characteristics of such overview have been described.

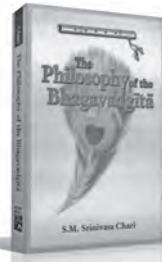
Food plays a crucial part in the health of an individual. Detailed guidelines regarding the type

and quantity of food to be taken is also given in this book. Different foods have been prescribed for persons having different *doshas*. The role of fasting and detoxification in Ayurveda is stressed upon, and methods of detoxification have also been given. The good effects of some common food items and vegetables are described. A description of various methods of treatment in Ayurveda is followed by a detailed Materia Medica of Ayurveda. Also given are non-herbal and mineral medicines, Ayurvedic formulas, and Ayurvedic home remedies. Some specific diseases and their treatments have also been discussed. We are taught how to integrate Ayurvedic herbs and foods into our daily lives and the relation between Ayurveda, kundalini, and yoga is also explained.

This book contains some valuable appendices that present a synopsis of therapies, a list of vegetable juices helpful in detoxification, and even recipes of some Ayurvedic delicacies! A glossary clarifies technical terms and the bibliography, index, and endnotes make the work useful for serious students, practitioners, and researchers. With so much information packed in a compact volume, it truly is 'the most complete guide to natural healing and health with traditional Ayurvedic herbalism', as the subtitle of the book claims. It is a welcome addition to the slowly increasing literature in English about Ayurveda. Such guidebooks help bring back Ayurveda to its lost glory.

Swami Narasimhananda
Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata

BOOK RECEIVED



The Philosophy of the Bhagavadgītā

S M Srinivasa Chari

Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers,
PB 5715, 54 Rani Jhansi Road, New
Delhi 110 055. Website: www.mrml-books.com. 2005. xxvi + 294 pp. ₹ 575.

The author of this scholarly work examines the commentaries of Acharya Shankara, Ramanujacharya, and Madhvacharya, and also consolidates the various ethical, theological, and philosophical ideas scattered in the Bhagavadgita.

REPORTS



Puppet shows on Swamiji in Gujarat



Commemoration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda

The following centres organized various programmes to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. **Antpur:** A youth convention on 1 September 2013. **Bhubaneswar:** A state-level seminar on Swamiji on 1 September, inaugurated by Sri Naveen Patnaik, chief minister of Odisha. **Chandigarh:** A symposium on 'Swami Vivekananda and Women Power' on 22 September. **Chengalpattu:** Processions, devotional music, and film shows on Swamiji. **Chennai Students' Home:** Exhibition, cultural competitions, and lectures at thirteen polytechnic colleges in Chennai and Kanchipuram. **Cooch Behar:** A spiritual retreat on 28 August. **Delhi:** 27 puppet shows on Swamiji in Gujarat, with the help of Rajkot ashrama, watched by nearly 20,000 persons. **Deoghar:** A two-day state-level seminar on 'Unity in Diversity'. **Dhaka and Narayanganj** centres in Bangladesh jointly celebrated from 26 to 28 September 2013—in collaboration with Sadhu Nag Mahashay Ashrama, Deobhog, Narayanganj—Swamiji's visit to Nag Mahashay's house on 25 March 1901 and to Langalband, a holy place on the bank of Brahmaputra River at Narayanganj, on 27 March 1901. Processions, speeches, and a music concert formed a part of the three-day celebration. Besides, the newly installed statue of Swamiji at the Deobhog ashrama was unveiled on this occasion. **Fiji:** An interfaith conference, lectures, and cultural programmes from 2 to 4 September. **Hyderabad:** A youth convention on 11 September

and a teachers' convention on 12 September. **Institute of Culture, Kolkata:** A national seminar on 'Swami Vivekananda's Relevance in Meeting the Challenges of the 21st Century'. **Kanpur:** A district-level youth convention on 31 August, attended by 250 youths. **Madurai:** Value education programme for parents on 7 September, and a youth convention and a public meeting on 11 September. **Malda:** An elocution competition on 11 August, in which students from 12 colleges in 3 districts of West Bengal took part. **Mangalore:** A series of value education and personality development programmes for college students and teachers. **Mauritius:** A programme comprising lectures and a cultural programme in a school on 11 September, attended by about 800 students, teachers, and parents. **Mumbai:** A national youth convention on 28 and 29 September, in which 350 youths took part. **Muzaffarpur:** A meeting and a cultural programme on 11 September, attended by about 500 people, mostly students. **Narendrapur:** A regional interfaith conference on 10 and 11 September. **New York Vedanta Society (USA):** Release of the booklet *Fear not, Be Strong*, authored by Swami Tathagatananda, on 15 September. **Palai:** Youth conventions on 2 and 13 August, in which altogether 570 students took part. **Pune:** A youth convention on 14 September, and a teachers' workshop and a devotees' convention on 15 September. **Puri Mission:** A spiritual retreat on 26 September, in which 160 devotees

took part. **Ramharipur:** A special programme comprising lectures and a musical performance on 22 September, attended by 1,150 people. **Ranchi Morabadi:** An interfaith meet on 11 September, attended by a good number of people. **Salem:** Four value education programmes for parents in Namakkal district and Salem on 10, 17, 18, and 24 August. **Swamiji's Ancestral House:** Special lectures on 24, 29, and 30 August, attended by about 1,350 persons. **Sydney (Australia):** An international seminar on 'Swami Vivekananda and His Quest for Sustained Human Development in both East and West' on 16 September, in collaboration with the University of Sydney and a few other organizations. **Vijayawada:** A two-day state-level seminar on 'Unity in Diversity' on 16 and 17 September, attended by about 650 people from 15 districts of Andhra Pradesh.

News from Branch Centres

Swami Suhitananda inaugurated two new hostel buildings of **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Malda**, on 6 September.

New portraits of the Holy Trio and Swami Vijnanananda were installed in the shrine of **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Kanpur**, on 13 September by Swami Suhitananda. On the same day, the swami unveiled the newly installed statue of Saraswati at the ashrama's school.

Achievements

Bamandipta Pal, a student of the Blind Boys' Academy at **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur** stood second in the First National Paralympic Triathlon Championship—swimming, cycling, and running—held at Kolkata on 31 August and 1 September. Students of the academy also participated in the 12th Bengal Paralympic Swimming Championship held at Kolkata on 31 August securing positions.

Bharat Chamber of Commerce has awarded

B P Poddar Memorial Award for the year 2012–13 to the Lokasiksha Parishad of **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur**, for its contribution to environmental improvement. The award, comprising a certificate, a citation, a plaque, and a sum of one lakh rupees, was handed over on 10 September.

Relief

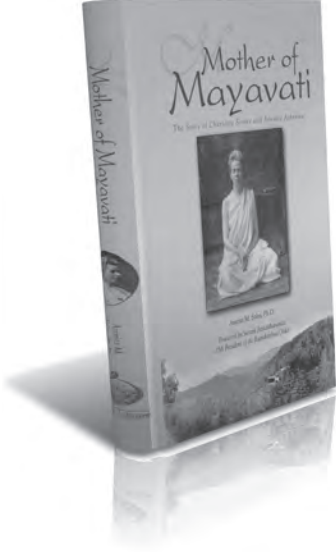
Distress Relief • The following centres distributed various items to needy people. **Baghbazar:** 1,000 saris to the slum-dwellers adjacent to the ashrama and 200 saris to poor people through Naora ashrama. **Karimganj:** 300 saris and 300 steel plates among needy people. **Khetri:** 1,980 notebooks among 357 needy students of 10 schools in and around Khetri.

Drought Relief • **Shivanahalli** centre continued its drought relief work by supplying 928,000 l of drinking water to 9,950 affected families in 8 villages of Kolar district from 26 August to 6 September.

Flood Relief • Following the recent flash floods caused by heavy rainfall in Rajkot, **Rajkot** centre served cooked food (khichri) to 1,000 flood-affected people and distributed 2,500 food packets (containing *gathiya*, biscuits, and sweets) among the victims in 8 areas of Rajkot city on 26 September. **Narendrapur** centre distributed 2,600 kg rice and 310 kg dal as well as 710 bamboos (under 'build your own house scheme') among 229 flood-affected families in Salpukur and Nepalganj areas under the Panakua Gram Panchayat in South 24 Parganas district from 5 to 18 September. **Saradapitha** centre distributed 118 blankets, 101 saris and 59 dhotis among 278 flood-affected families of Narit village, Amta-2 block, Howrah district, on 18 September. In the wake of the flooding of Padma river in Ratinagar-2 block of Murshidabad district, **Sargachhi** centre served cooked food (khichri) to 550 and 2,000 persons in Borderpara village on 7 and 8 September respectively. **Tamluk** centre distributed 40,000 kg chira, 2,000 kg sugar, and 250,000 halogen tablets among 9,524 flood-affected families belonging to 32 villages of Nandakumar and Tamluk-1 blocks in Purba Medinipur district. ☞

Mother of Mayavati

—Amrita M. Salm



It was Swami Vivekananda's dream to start a centre on the Himalayan heights. He wanted this centre to be dedicated to Advaita philosophy alone. In his vision, it was to be a centre where the East and the West would meet to give full and free expression to the Highest Truth of Non-dualism, without any of the weakening ingredients of the philosophy of the dualistic schools. His dream was actualized by a couple from England, Mr. and Mrs. Seviers, especially by the latter. After the founding of Mayavati Advaita Ashrama, soon Mr. Sevier passed away. Then it was Mrs. Sevier who, through her gritty determination and lofty character, built and consolidated the centre. In course of her amazing life there, she eventually emerged to become the 'Mother of Mayavati'.

Mother of Mayavati is the inspiring story of Mrs. Sevier's life—a life exemplifying complete dedication to the spiritual ideal, purity, and selfless love for all. And with her life-story is entwined the early stages of the history of Advaita Ashrama. The book contains also her letters and brilliant articles, and even important documents related to her and the centre. Forty-nine colourful pictures have also been included, further embellishing the beauty and worth of the book.

Pages xxiv + 400 | Price ₹ 200
Packing & Postage: ₹ 50

Patanjali Yoga Sutra— Hindi Audio DVD

—Swami Brahmeshananda

The common aim of Indian philosophies is to attain liberation. Yoga is a means of liberation. Patanjali Yoga Sutra is the seminal text on Yoga. Swami Brahmeshananda, a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order and a former editor of the English journal Vedanta Kesari, lucidly explains the sutra in detail.

This DVD is an attempt to bring out the practical aspects of the Yoga philosophy for the benefit of the listeners.



60 Hours | Price ₹ 100 | Packing & Postage: ₹ 55



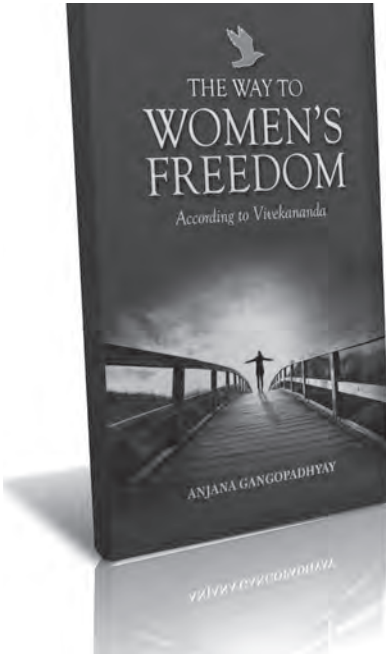
Please write to:

ADVAITA ASHRAMA, 5 Dehi Entally Road, Kolkata 700 014, India

Phones: 91-33-22890898 / 22840210 / 22866483, Email: mail@advaitaashrama.org

The Way to Women's Freedom

Anjana Gangopadhyay



Women everywhere have suffered for ages from the disabilities and violations perpetrated by men. This issue has been studied and researched from various angles by scholars and thinkers all over the world. Large numbers of books have been written and there have been opinions of diverging kinds. Swami Vivekananda was one of the great personalities of the nineteenth century who had incisive views on this matter. The author has carefully collected the important utterances of Swami Vivekananda and presented them in such a manner that a clear picture of the FREE, INDEPENDENT WOMAN emerges. We are sure this book will open the eyes of womenfolk and show them the way to “true freedom” from their present state.

Pages 64 | Price ₹ 30 | Packing & Postage: ₹ 30

Fear Not Be Strong

—Swami Tathagatananda

Strength and fearlessness are the two prime virtues, among the others, which are the markers of health of a human being (both man and woman) and society. Every crime, antisocial and inhuman act is the outcome of lack of true strength and fearlessness. But what do we mean by strength, and what does fearlessness connote? Swami Tathagatananda has presented Vivekananda's views on this matter, which, we are sure, will shed new light on our understanding of these eternal virtues.

Pages 56 | Price ₹ 20 | Packing & Postage: ₹ 30



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Swami Vivekananda Tells Stories

Compiled and Edited by Swami Atmashraddhananda



Swamiji was a wonderful storyteller. His talks and writings are interspersed with numerous anecdotes and illustrations. Some of these are well-known, while others are not, but they are all relevant and thought-provoking, revealing his profound knowledge of human nature—its potential and its limitations. This collection contains most of the stories from his nine-volume Complete Works published by us. The 106 stories contained in this volume have been classified under 10 headings. Some are just a paragraph, while others go on for several pages, but all are sure to give readers fresh insights. These stories have been illustrated with line drawings.

Pages 224 | Price ₹ 70 | Packing & Postage: ₹ 35

Empowering the Youth—The Vivekananda Way

Edited by Dr M Sivaramkrishna

The idea behind this book is to place Swamiji's teachings in the context of today's problems, and urge the youth to find methods to put the teachings into practice. The second part of the book, which is a workbook, urges the reader to assimilate and understand various incidents from Swamiji's life based on his teachings. For each incident, there is a paragraph in his own words followed by questions. We believe this book will help the youth of today to realise the practical value of Swami Vivekananda's teachings and also to inspire them to put his precepts into practice.



Pages 72 | Price ₹ 30 | Packing & Postage: ₹ 30



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